

AL-GHAZALI

FEAR
AND
HOPE

Translated by William McKane



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Preface

I wish to record my sincere thanks and to acknowledge my indebtedness to my former teacher, the Reverend E.F.F. Bishop, who first suggested that I might translate this work and who gave me much help and encouragement in its early stages. I have also enjoyed generous cooperation from my colleagues in Glasgow. Dr J.S. Trimingham gave up much time to discuss translation problems with me, and Emeritus Professor James Robson gave me the benefit of his advice in respect of residual difficulties. This is, so far as I am aware, a pioneer translation into English, and there are a few places where I am not entirely satisfied with the translation or convinced that the sense of the Arabic has been pierced. It will be a task for future translators to clear up these obscurities.

I also wish to express my sincere thanks to the Publications Standing Committee of the University of Glasgow, whose generosity has made the publication of this work possible. In particular, I am greatly indebted to the University Librarian, Mr R.O. Mac Kenna, for his guidance and helpfulness. I am also grateful to Miss D.E. Collins, Messrs. Faber and Faber, Ltd. and Messrs. A.P. Watt and Son for the permission given to quote two extracts from G.K. Chesterton's *Chaucer*. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to the house of E.J. Brill for undertaking the publication of this book and my deep appreciation of the skill and craftsmanship with which they have produced it.



Introduction

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) wrote his greatest work, *The Revival of The Religious Sciences*, while he was living the life of an ascetic in Damascus c.1096 AD. He had been prostrated by a tremendous inner crisis and had been swamped by intellectual doubt and spiritual debility. Relinquishing his theological chair in Baghdad and turning his back on a brilliant academic career, he gave up wealth and position and announced his intention of going on pilgrimage to Mecca. The aim of the itinerary which he now purposed, in the course of which he was to submit himself to the most rigorous of ascetic disciplines, was to follow the Sufi path to “the light of unveiling” and to discover a “knowledge” which had eluded him while he was employed with the categories of systematic theology. It was thus he came to Damascus and found leisure to write his magnum opus.¹

The plan of the work is that of four “quarters” or volumes, each containing ten books. The general title of the first volume is *Worship*, and all the books (with the exception of I and II, which contain an epistemological and theological introduction) can be subsumed under this head. Similarly

1. See especially W.M. Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, 1953. This contains a translation of al-Ghazālī’s autobiographical work, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (pp. 19-85).

with the second volume, whose general title is *Personal Behaviour*, and the third, which deals with mortal sins. The fourth volume, of which *The Book of Fear and Hope* is the third book, is concerned with the means of salvation, that is, the techniques or therapies by which the cure of the soul is achieved. This book is an interesting sample of al-Ghazālī's work in his fourth volume.²

2. See especially the digest of the contents of *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* in G.H. Bousquet, *Ghazālī Ouloûm ed-Din ou Vivification des Sciences De La Foi*, 1955. Also the plan of the work in S. 81-82.

Text

There are practically no textual difficulties. I have translated from the 1939 Cairo edition, and in the few places where I thought textual corruption to be possible, I have consulted the 1908 Cairo edition. The one or two examples of incorrect copying which I have found in the 1939 text are noted in the course of the translation. The translation omits all honorific ascriptions. The references in the margins are to the pagination of the 1939 edition.



The argument of the book

I propose to say nothing at all here about the historical relationships of *The Book of Fear and Hope*, either about its indebtedness to antecedents or its influence on the subsequent course of thought. My intention is to give an account of the argument of the book and to indicate where its intrinsic value may be thought to lie.

The Book of Fear and Hope might well be described as an essay on the tactics of propagating the Faith to the community at large. The principal objective is to outline the salutary employment of fear and hope in the cure of the soul. The book may be said to deal with a topic of pastoral psychology, and is a good sample of the work of al-Ghazālī in so far as it illustrates some of the reasons why he has attained so commanding a position within Islam and exercised so great an influence on the course of theological thought. He is in the best sense a popular theologian. His primary concern is to secure practical results on the broadest front, and in his thinking, his paramount consideration is to promote the most salubrious climate for the whole community of Faith. He consequently disposes of other claims according to the way in which they react to this supreme demand.

The scholars are only a small part of the community, and their liberty must not be a liberty to create confusion among

the rank and file by throwing doubt on the clear-cut simplicity of their affirmations of faith. The spiritual diet of the general run of believers is best kept in balance by feeding them judiciously on the Qur'an and the Traditions. When scholars communicate their predilections to the people, this has the effect of blurring the simplicity of categorical statements of faith and of introducing a dialectic with which minds of ordinary calibre cannot cope. This is the grievance of his charge against the systematic theologians, and it rests partly on a careful empirical examination of the actual levels of mental endowment in the community and on a sober assessment of what can be expected from it of intellectual endeavour.

In his polemic against the theologians, the virtues of al-Ghazālī's style, his power and incisiveness, are seen to their best advantage. He is a shrewd and entertaining polemicist, and he writes with the gusto of a talented pamphleteer. Whatever judgement is passed on the substance of these passages, no one is likely to complain that they are dull or wanting in distinction of style.

If observation led al-Ghazālī to conclude that men vary greatly in their intellectual capacities and that most men are but modestly endowed, the same activity prompted him to conclude that there are great differences of temperament among men and that this must be seriously reckoned with in any attempt to fashion effective machinery for the propagation of the Faith. This insight is applied to the instruments of fear and hope.

On the one hand, al-Ghazālī discourages hope where the proper basis for it does not exist; on the other, he indicates that it is a therapy which can be applied with profit to two classes of men, those overcome by fear and those paralysed by despair. His stringent formulation of the conditions of hope is directed

against such as suffer from a false sense of security and are deluded as to their true condition by a brash self-assurance.

Hope then has therapeutic value for men so burdened with a sense of sin as almost to despair of God's pardon, and it is particularly valuable at the onset of death, since it encourages a man to be optimistic about his prospects with God and to fasten his thoughts on His pardon rather than on his own sinfulness. There is a sense in which hope is a higher motive than fear, since hope is dominated by love and the creatures nearest to God are those who love Him most.

Yet hope can only operate beneficially within a very limited area of human life, because it is not a therapeutic technique well adapted to the condition of most men. Most men are so temperamentally poised that to treat their condition with hope would simply increase their peril and hasten their passage to perdition. The aim of the therapeutic techniques of fear and hope is to repair deficiencies and to correct excesses, and so restore a proper balance to the soul. This is the desired posture, and hope and fear should be employed, as a skilful and discriminating physician would use the materials of medicine, in order to compensate for harmful eccentricities and bring back the soul to the point of equilibrium.

Al-Ghazālī's analysis of fear is more elaborate than that of hope, and he takes up the greater part of the book with it. This is due partly to his conviction that fear has the greater relevance in the contemporary situation, but it is also accounted for by its place in his gnostic or mystical teaching and its importance for his theology, of which predestination is the keystone. Fear may be the consequence of "knowledge" of God or of the "knowledge" of one's sins, or of both of these together.

Among those who fear there are an elite who make up one class, and believers of more ordinary calibre who compose the other. These two groups are distinguished in various ways. The spiritual aristocrats are the gnostics; the members of the less exalted group are the sound in faith or, more literally, the healthy. The gnostic fears what is not abhorrent in itself (i.e., abhorrent to God); the man who is healthy fears God because of his sins. The fear of the gnostic is the fruit of "knowledge" of God, and the chief objects of his fear are predestination and the Evil End (*sū' al-khātimah*). The fear of the man who is healthy derives not from what he "knows" by insight, but from what he accepts on authority. In so far as the gnostic fears what is abhorrent in itself, he fears the veil, that is, permanent alienation from God. In another passage, al-Ghazālī offers an alternative classification and contrasts the fear of the gnostics with that of the practitioners, the healthy, the ascetics and the body of the people.

To indicate that fear is a mature gnostic trait, al-Ghazālī relates a tradition concerning the Prophet Muḥammad (s) and Abū Bakr which shows that fear of the strategems of God is a more advanced station than reliance on the promises of God, because it can derive only from perfection of "knowledge." Here again, however, his characteristic insistence on balance and moderation reappears. This gnostic fear has to be kept in balance, for excess of it would lead to mental deterioration and death.

Of wider application than this gnostic fear, which is the preserve of the few, is the fear employed as a therapeutic instrument in the pastoral care of the many. This fear may be deficient or excessive, and what is desired is the middle way between these two extremes. Deficient fear produces no more than sentimental regret; effective fear restrains the

members from disobedience and binds them to obedience, and “whatever does not take effect on the members is no more than an impulse or a fleeting motion, which does not deserve the name of fear.” Al-Ghazālī’s dislike of extravagance and immoderation appears again in his citing of a pungent aphorism of Sahl al-Tustarī, an earlier Sufi, who used to say to novices who persisted in fasting, “Keep your wits. God has never had a saint who was mentally deficient.”

Fear, which is worthy of the name only if it has an effect on behaviour, is differentiated into different ranks or degrees according to its mode of regulating behaviour. If it is an incentive only to chastity, it possesses a degree. Higher in merit is the fear which produces abstinence, and higher still that which produces piety. “The highest of its degrees is to produce the degrees of the sincere, which is one’s tearing away, outwardly and inwardly, from what is other than God. This is the highest of its commendable characteristics, and is accompanied with preservation of health and mind.”

As a therapeutic device, fear is directed particularly to those who suffer from the disease of fancied security. Yet here again there is counterpoise in al-Ghazālī’s thinking, for he says that ordinary mortals must not be too aware of the nature of God and that an admixture of negligence is a mercy for them. What negligence does to maintain the equilibrium in ordinary believers, hope does for the gnostic.

It will have been observed that al-Ghazālī makes large use of the medical idiom. This is more than an accident of style; it points to the nature and area of his concern. He is not interested in theological discussion, in the inspection of premises or the reappraisal of fundamental positions. This is a kind of activity to which he is antipathetic and which, in his view, is full of pitfalls and perils. His concern is with the correct and judicious

employment of fear and hope as therapies in the cure of souls. He is consequently interested in the discriminating diagnosis of spiritual ills, since it is the mastery of such skills which will keep the community in good spiritual health. He is a kind of medical officer of health; his sense of responsibility ranges over the entire community, and his province is the soul. Some of the most colourful passages of the book are, as a consequence, couched in the idiom of medicine. There is the division of the community of believers (already noted) into gnostics and healthy (*sālihī*). There is his disapproval of the category of more meritorious in relation to fear and hope, and his assertion that to ask whether fear or hope is the higher good is to ask what is, for the most part, a spurious question.

The category of greatest utility and widest application in this connection is that of more salutary (*aslahī*), again a formation from "*slhī*." Fear and hope are not contradictory to each other, but are interdependent and complementary therapies. Supposition derives from the imbalance of fear and hope, representing an intensification of either fear or hope, depending on which is the dominant partner. Supposition is therefore either a hoping for the best or a fearing the worst.

Al-Ghazālī's method throughout his work is to employ the Qur'an, Traditions and Reports, in association with his original observations, as additional incentives to fear and hope. It may be conjectured that it was also his intention to demonstrate in this way his own conformity with these canons of orthodoxy. His procedure is thus Reflection, Qur'an, Traditions and Reports. This is in fact not so serious a handicap as might be supposed, and does not subdue the force of his originality nor weaken the sinewy predilections which are a feature of his writing.

It is true, however, that when he embarks on theology proper, his freedom of manoeuvre is somewhat reduced. I

am not suggesting that he found this confinement irksome. All the indications in this book are that he considered it expedient and salutary to close the door forever on any speculative re-exploration of those fundamental questions to which normative answers had been given. The “health” of the community required this, and for him that was far and away the most compelling consideration.

Thus, it seems to me that in the section on the Evil End, which is more directly theological than other portions of the book, there may be detected in places a certain diminution of vigour and incisiveness and a tendency to be less impressive than elsewhere. Al-Ghazālī says the gnostic’s fear is such that he is sandwiched between predestination and the End, and this, in another connection, describes rather well his own theological boundaries and lack of elbow room.

The Evil End has two degrees, a major and a minor; the first derives from apostasy and doubt, and the second from the domination of the heart by worldly affairs and lusts. Everything hinges on the state dominating a man’s heart at the instant in which death finds him, but whereas the major Evil End is irrevocable, it is not entirely impossible to make amends where the Evil End does not involve apostasy and doubt. The End is the confirmation of what has been predestined for a man, and its terror is multiplied by this tie-up with the mystery of predestination, for it may come as a sudden and unique reversal initiated by God, the Reverser of Hearts, impressing on a man’s life the Evil End.

Two causes of the Evil End are specified: the first, erroneous belief concerning God, which cannot be mitigated by practical piety; the second, weakness of faith in the root and the mastery of the love of the world. With respect to the first cause, it may operate through a man’s active participation in

speculative theology or through his acceptance on authority of the results of speculation. Here the extremely serious view which al-Ghazālī takes of intellectual error in relation to the doctrine of God is clearly seen. Such error taints not only the thinking of a few speculative minds but the beliefs of the many, before whom the Scholars exhibit the wares of their intellects. It is these considerations which regulate his generally unfavourable attitude to speculative theology.

The minor End also has two causes, much disobedience and weakness of faith. This is elucidated with reference to the state of sleep, since death is akin to sleep, and the throes of death, as a time of disclosure, is akin to dreams. As the images of dreams reflect the objects seen in waking life, so the images associated with the throes of death will reflect those activities and preoccupations which have been the familiars of a man throughout his life, for a man dies as he has lived.

It will now be obvious, therefore, that we are not to expect from al-Ghazālī a treatment of hope amounting to an eschatological discussion, since this was the kind of activity for which he was condemning the theologians. There is no attempt to assess what the ultimate ingredients of hope are. There are the concrete descriptions of Paradise and the Fire in the Qur'an with their uncompromisingly corporeal imagery; there is the Day of Resurrection and Judgement, inescapable and final. It would have been about this kind of material that a theologian might have employed himself in order to initiate an eschatological discussion and ask fundamental questions about the nature of hope and its implications for the individual and the community.

In al-Ghazālī's view the premises were finally settled and were not a subject for further enquiry. It was enough to assert belief in the Judgement, Paradise and the Fire, and then to

devote all his energies to devising effective pastoral techniques for bringing men to safety and Paradise. There is consequently nothing of the debating of the problems of theodicy, which is inseparable from the topic of eschatological hope in the Jewish apocalyptic literature, where the End is essentially the moment of comprehensive and retrospective forensic readjustment by which all the wrongs of historical existence will be righted and its unresolved contradictions satisfactorily removed.

Al-Ghazālī's point of view is correctly conveyed by his juxtaposition of fear and hope. He knows that despair and not fear is the opposite of hope, but these are not the two poles between which his discussion moves. He mentions despair only in so far as it is a pathological condition which is to be treated with the therapy of hope in the same way as excessive fear is to be treated. He does not contrast despair with hope after the fashion of an eschatological discussion in the context of Christian theology, where the polarity of hope and despair is the point of departure.

This somewhat negative attitude to speculative theology is compensated for by a positive emphasis on a different kind of research into the nature of God, conducted not by means of the categories of speculative thought but by the "light of disclosure." The way to a complete "knowledge" of God is along the Sufi path. This teaching is small in bulk in the work under review, but there are one or two explicit statements of it, while, always underlying his negative attitude to philosophical enquiry into the nature of God, there is the implicit contrast between knowledge or science (*'ilm*) and "knowledge" or gnosis (*ma'rifah*). The first is a defective and dangerous mode of apprehending God, the second a self-authenticating insight.

Among the items of positive Sufi teaching is his account of the stations by way of which the seeker attains to the goal

of the Sufi path. "And no station can succeed the root of assurance except fear and hope, and only patience can succeed these two, and accompanying it is spiritual combat and utter devotion to God outwardly and inwardly. For the person to whom the Way has been opened up there can be no station after spiritual combat except guidance and knowledge, and only the station of love and intimacy can succeed knowledge; and following necessarily on love is satisfaction with the action of the Beloved and confidence in His care which is trustfulness." There are also his definitions of state and station and his description of the man who has outgrown fear and hope, "whose heart is ruled by truth and who lives in the present through his seeing the majesty of truth perpetually."

Of esoteric or theosophical doctrines there are few traces. Sleep is believed to be a time of revelation, for in it a man is withdrawn from the cares and distractions of this world and has his inward eye focused on the Preserved Tablet on which the undisclosed secrets of the future time are inscribed. Also, the Throne is represented as a kind of recording apparatus on which men's states are impressed to be reproduced at the End as a witness against them. The lodging of the blessed soul in the interim period between death and the Last Judgement is in the crops of green birds which are suspended beneath the Throne. Whatever the state of the soul, be it blessed or reprobate, it will be reunited with the body for the final forensic act.

In conclusion it may be reiterated that the overriding concern of al-Ghazālī is to devise means by which the many may participate in religion and be exposed to its salutary effects. He consequently confronts courageously what moderns call the problem of communication, although, as I have tried to show, he has his own distinctive definition of the problem. He is not conscious that there is any difficulty

in communicating to the rank and file the rudiments of the Faith; he is not interested in any essay in reinterpretation. His preoccupation is with effective and salutary pastoral procedures which will make religion a dominant force in the lives of people of whom too much is not to be expected. This is a serious consideration for every religious thinker, since the appeal and claims of religion must traverse the multiplicity of human life, and its word must go out in such a way that the common people hear it and are afforded a genuine opportunity of response and participation. Religion must not be so formulated as to become a fascinating intellectual exercise for the scholars, nor yet should it be a sublime and other-worldly saintliness for the few who are cast in the mould of saints. The therapeutic virtue ascribed to fear may seem to us to be antique or even repulsive, but we ought to give al-Ghazālī credit for his unfaltering awareness that this kind of pressing problem does exist, whatever we may think the solution to be. On this problem and its relevance to our modern society, there is a gem of a digression in Chesterton's book on Chaucer:

Thus the Canterbury pilgrimage takes on a very symbolic social character and is indeed the progress which emerged out of the mediaeval into the modern world. All modern critics can take pleasure in the almost modern realism of the portraiture; in the veracity of types and the vigour of the quarrels. But the modern problem is more and more the problem of keeping the company together at all; and the company was kept together because it was going to Canterbury.... As their counterparts stand today it is easier to imagine the Wife of Bath wanting to go sunbathing at Margate, or the Clerk instantly returning, with refined disgust, to Oxford, rather than to imagine either of them wanting to toil on together to a particular tomb

in Canterbury. For the moment this division of heart is masked by a certain heartiness in the modern pursuit of mere games and pleasures, but you cannot make a complete social system out of games and pleasures. You can not in some dark hour of peril ask thousands to die for the Derby, or even to be taxed to death for the International Golf Championship. A nation that has nothing but its amusements will not be amused for very long. Moreover, the amusements are at least as narrow as the devotions and dedications. You will not persuade the Clerk of Oxford to go to Ramsgate merely to see the Miller win the Ram. You will not persuade the Miller to go to Oxford, which might well have been named, at that time, after the Dumb Ox of Philosophy: St Thomas of Aquin. But they were both ready to go to the shrine of St Thomas of Canterbury. The real modern problem is-what pilgrimage have we on which these two different men will ride together?¹

1. G.K. Chesterton, *Chaucer*, 1948, pp. 182-183.

The book of fear and hope

It is the third book of the volume “The Means of Salvation” from *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Praise be to God whose loving kindness and reward are hoped for, whose stratagems (*makr*) and punishment are feared, who keeps alive the hearts of His saints (*wali*) with the breath of hope in Him so that He may urge them on with the kindnesses of His benefits to alight in His courtyard¹ and be away from His house of tribulation, which is the abode of His enemies. With the lashes of threat and His harsh upbraiding, He has driven those who shun His presence towards the house of His reward and preferment; He has blocked them from thwarting His leaders and becoming the object of His wrath and vengeance by leading the different types of His creatures with chains of violence and coercion, and reins of compassion and graciousness, to His Garden.

1. Margaret Smith, G. 165 translates *الزروں بنائے* as “to arrive at absorption in Himself.” There is, however, an antithetic parallelism in the construction of the preamble, and “courtyard” corresponds to “house of tribulation.”

And blessings be on Muhammad, master of His prophets, best of mankind, and on his family and Companions and offspring.

Hope and fear are two wings by means of which those who are brought near fly to every commendable station. They are two mounts on which every steep ascent of the paths of the next world is traversed. Nothing but the reins of hope will lead the man, who is distant from hoping and heavy with burdens, who is encompassed with what the heart abhors and with toils of members and limbs, to the vicinity of the Merciful and the joy of the Gardens. Nothing will avert the fire of Hell and the painful punishment from the man who is encompassed with the temptations of lusts and the marvels of pleasures except the scourges of threats and the assaults of violence. Consequently, there is nothing for it but an exposition of the essence and merits of them both, as well as the way of arriving at a junction between the two of them, in spite of their polarity and mutual antipathy. We join them in a single book which is comprised of two parts, the first part concerning hope and the second part about fear. As for the first part, it is made up of an exposition of the essence of hope and an exposition of its merit, and an exposition of the therapy of hope and the way in which hope is induced by it.

PART I
Hope



1

The essence of hope

Know that hope is among the sum of the stations of the pilgrims and the states of the seekers. The description “station” (*maqām*) is given when it is permanent and endures, and “state” (*ḥāl*) only when transitoriness is hinted at. Just as yellow is divided into permanent yellow, such as the yellow of gold, into transitory yellow, such as the yellow of fear, and into what comes between these two, such as the yellow of a sick person, the attributes of the heart follow these divisions. Whatever is not permanent is called a “state” because it soon changes. This is continually happening in any description of the heart.

We are dealing at present with the essence of hope. Hope also comprises state, knowledge and deed; knowledge is the cause which produces the state, and the state decrees the deed. Hope is the comprehensive name of the three. Its exposition is that everything that confronts you is either what is abhorred or what is desired, and is divided into what is existent at the moment, what has existed in the past and what is expected in the future. When what has existed in the past occurs to your mind, it is called “remembering” and “recollecting”; if what occurs to your mind is existent at the moment, it is called “finding” and “tasting” and “perceiving.” It is called “finding” because it is a state which you find yourself in. If the existence

of something in the future occurs to your mind and prevails over your heart, it is called “expectation” and “anticipation.” If the thing expected is abhorred, with pain in the heart resulting from it, it is called “fear” and “distress.” If it is something desired, with pleasure and relief of heart resulting from the expectation of it and the attachment of the heart to it and the occurrence of its existence to your mind, that relief is hope.

Hence, hope is the relief of the heart, because of the expectation of what it esteems desirable. But the desirable thing which is anticipated must have a cause, so if the expectation of it is on account of the obtaining of the majority of the means to it, the word “hope” in relation to it is justified. If that expectation is in spite of the defectiveness of the means to it and its disorder, the words “self-delusion” and “stupidity” are more justified in relation to the expectation than that of “hope.” If the means are not specified either as existent or in mutual contradiction, the word “wishful thinking” is more justified in relation to the expectation of it, because it is an expectation which is devoid of a cause. In any circumstance, the words “hope” and “fear” do not apply to what is determined. For one does not say, “I hope for the rising of the sun at the time of sunrise, and I fear its setting at the time of sunset,” because that is determined. But one does say, “I hope that the rain will fall, and I fear lest it should be cut off.”

The masters of hearts (*arbāb al-qulūb*) teach that this present world is the field of the next world. The heart is as the earth, faith is as the seed in it, and obedience is conducive to the turning over of the earth and the cleansing of it and the digging of channels and the leading of waters to them. The heart which is infatuated with this present world and submerged in it is like swampy ground in which the seed does not fructify. The Day of Resurrection is the day of reaping, and

no one reaps except what he has sown, and only he who has sown the seed of faith grows crops. Rarely is faith profitable in company with a vicious heart whose moral traits are tainted, just as seed does not fructify in swampy soil. It is fitting that the hope of the creature for pardon should equal the hope of the owner of the crops.

For everyone who seeks good ground and casts into it seed of first quality neither mouldy nor worm-eaten, then furnishes it with what is necessary for it—that is, tendering it with water at appropriate times—then clears the ground of thorns and weeds and everything that obstructs the growth of the seed or makes it rot, then sits down and expects from God His bounty like the warding off of thunderbolts and blights, until his crop is mature and he arrives at his goal, his expectation is called “hope.” If he scatters his seed in ground which is baked hard or swampy, which is so elevated that the water does not flow into it, and does not labour one whit in the preparation of the seed—if he then expects a harvest from it, his expectation is called “stupidity” and “self-delusion,” not “hope.” If he scatters seed in ground which is good but without water, and waits for the waters of the rains where they were neither prevail nor are cut off, his expectation is called “wishful thinking” and not “hope.” Therefore, the word “hope” is legitimate only in relation to the expectation of a thing desired, all of whose means, which come within the choice of the creature, have been facilitated, and only what does not come within his choice remains. This is the bounty of God in repelling birds and blights.

So when the creature sows the seed of faith and irrigates it with the water of obedience and cleanses the heart from the thorns of vicious moral traits and then expects from the bounty of God his being established in that course until

death and the Virtuous End (*husn al-khātimah*) that gives access to pardon, such expectation as his is hope in its essence, commendable in itself. It gives him an incentive for perseverance and endurance, in accordance with the means of faith, in perfecting the means of pardon until death. If its preparation with the water of obedience is cut off from the seed of faith, or, if the heart is remiss, filled with moral delinquencies and obstinately persists in seeking the pleasures of this world, yet expects pardon, its expectation is stupidity and delusion.

The Messenger of God (*s*) said, “The fool is he whose soul follows its passions and who desires Heaven from God.” In the Qur'an, God says, “Yet they were succeeded by generations (of people) who lost all thought of prayer and followed (but) their own lusts; and these will, in time, meet with utter disillusion” (Qur'an, 19:59). He also says, “After them succeeded a generation—they inherited the Book, but they chose (for themselves) the vanities of this world, saying, ‘Everything will be forgiven us’” (Qur'an, 7:169). Furthermore, God condemned the owner of the garden. “He entered his garden in a state (of mind) unjust to his soul—he said, ‘I deem not that this will ever perish; nor do I deem that the Hour (of judgement) will (ever) come; even if I am brought back so my Lord, I shall surely find (there) something better in exchange’” (Qur'an, 18:35-36).

Therefore, the creature who strives after obedience and recoils from disobedience is right to expect from the bounty of God the completion of blessing (Qur'an, 5:9), which achieves completion only by entry into Heaven. As for the disobedient person, when he has repented and repaired all that was remiss through shortcoming, it is proper that he should hope for the acceptance of his repentance. With regard to the acceptance

of repentance, when he has come to abhor disobedience, when sin grieves him and virtue delights him, when he blames himself and reproves evil and desires repentance and yearns after it, it is proper that he should hope from God advancement towards repentance because of his repugnance for disobedience; and his zeal for repentance is conducive to the cause which may give access to repentance.

Hope is only present after the consolidating of its means. For that reason God says, "But those who have believed and emigrated and striven in the way of God have hope of the mercy of God" (Qur'an, 2:218), meaning that these have a right to hope for the mercy of God. God did not intend by it that the existence of hope is exclusive to them, since others also may hope, but he has made exclusive to them the right to hope. As for him who obstinately perseveres in what God abhors, not blaming himself for it or resolving to repent and return, his hope of pardon is stupidity, as is the hope of the person who has sown seed in swampy ground and made up his mind not to cultivate it by bringing water to it and cleansing it of weeds.

Yahyā ibn Mu‘ādh said, "The person who magnifies self-conceit is, in my opinion, the one who prolongs his sins, for he hopes for pardon without repentance, expects to draw near to God without obedience, expects the crops of Heaven with the seed of Hell, seeks after the dwelling place of obedience with the deeds of disobedience and expects the reward without deeds. He has wishful thoughts of God while he is neglectful."

You hope for salvation
And you have not trodden its paths.
But the ship does not progress on dry land.

Since you are acquainted with the essence of hope and its marks, you know that it is a state which knowledge has produced through the setting in motion of the majority of the

means. This state produces zeal to persevere in accordance with what is possible. For the man whose seed is fine, whose land is good and who has abundance of water is entitled to his hope. His legitimate hope will continually urge him towards the oversight of the ground, the cultivation of it and the clearing of all the weeds which grow on it. Thus, he will not be remiss in any detail of its cultivation until the time of harvest. This is because hope sets him at the opposite pole from despair, and despair inhibits cultivation. For whoever knows that the ground is swampy, that the water will not flow and the seed will not grow, will, doubtless, as a consequence, neglect the land and neglect toiling in its cultivation.

Hope is a commendable thing because it is a source of incentive. Despair is reprehensible and is the antithesis of hope because it distracts from work. Fear is not the antithesis of hope but rather a companion reveal. Moreover, it is another source of incentive, impelling along the path of awe just as hope impels along the path of inclination. Hence, the state of hope produces sustained spiritual combat through actions and produces perseverance in obedience, however fickle circumstances may be. Among its effects are finding pleasure in unbroken acceptance with God, contentment in private prayer and fondness for relying on Him. These states must be manifest to everyone who hopes, whether king or commoner, so how will they not be manifest to God? If they are not manifest, it will be a pointer to preclusion from the station of hope and descent into the pit of self-delusion and wishful thinking.

This, then, is the exposition of the state of hope, how knowledge produces it and how action is produced from it. A tradition of Zayd al-Khayl is a pointer to its producing these actions. He said to the Messenger of God, "I have come to

enquire of you about God's way of identifying the person who aspires and the person who does not aspire." So the Messenger of God (s) asked, "How do you go about it?" He said, "I have made a practice of loving virtue and its people, and whenever I have the capacity for anything belonging to it, I make haste towards it and believe firmly in its reward. When anything belonging to it eludes me, I am grieved thereby and yearn after it." So the Prophet (s) said, "This is God's identification mark in respect of the one who aspires, and if He had desired you for other things, He would have prepared you for them and would not be concerned in which of their alleys you perished." Thus, the Prophet Muhammad (s) has mentioned an identification mark of the person by whom virtue is sought, and, consequently, whoever hopes that there may be the intention of virtue without this mark is self-deluded.

2

The merit of hope

*K*now that action on account of hope is of a higher order than action on account of fear, because the creatures who are nearest to God are those who love Him most, and love dominates hope. This is expressed by two kings, one of whom is served through fear of his punishment and the other through hope of his reward. For this reason, what is desired, especially at the time of death, has to do with hope and optimism. God says, “Do not despair of the mercy of God” (Qur'an, 39:53). Thus, He proscribed the root of despair. It is recorded in the traditions about Ya'qūb that God revealed to him, “Do you know why I parted Yūsuf from you? It was because you said, ‘I am afraid that the wolf will eat him, while you are neglectful of him.’¹ Why did you fear the wolf and not hope in Me? Why did you have regard to the negligence of his brothers and did not have regard to My preserving him?”

The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, “Let not one of you die without good expectations of God.” He was also reported to have said that God says, ‘I am in accord with what my creature supposes of Me, so let him suppose of Me what he wills.’

Once, the Messenger of God (ṣ) visited a man who was at the point of death and asked, “How do you find yourself?”

1. Cf. Qur'an, 12:14.

The man said, "I find that I am fearing my sins and hoping for the mercy of my Lord." So the Messenger (ṣ) said, "These two were not united in the heart of a creature in this homeland except that God granted him what he hoped and made him secure from what he feared."

'Alī said to a man whom fear had brought to a state of despair because of his sins, "O you, your despairing of the mercy of God is a greater fault than your sins."

Sufyān said, "Whoever commits a sin and knows that God has assigned it against him, yet hopes for His pardon, God will pardon him his sin," adding, "For God upbraided a group of people, saying, 'That, your supposition which you did entertain about your Lord has ruined you; and you find yourselves (this day) among the lost' (Qur'an, 41:23)." God says, "And you conceived an evil thought, for you are a people lost (in wickedness)" (Qur'an, 48:12).

The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "Indeed, God will say to His creature on the Day of Resurrection, 'What obstructed you from loathing a hated thing when you saw it?' Then, if God has given him a grasp of his defence, he will say, 'O Lord, I hoped in You and I feared the people.' God will say, 'I have forgiven you.'"

According to a sound tradition, there was a money lender who was magnanimous to the rich and overlooked the debts of the destitute. He met God and had not wrought a single good deed. God said, "Who has a better right to that than we have?" So He pardoned him because of his optimism and his hope that He would pardon him despite his being devoid of obedience.

God says in the Qur'an, "Surely those who recite the Book of God and perform the prayer, and give alms in secret and openly of what We have provided them with, hope for a commerce that will never fail" (Qur'an, 35:29). When the

Messenger of God (s) said, "If you knew what I know, then you would laugh but little and would weep much, and would go out to the hills, beating your breasts and making entreaty to your Lord," Jibril swooped down and said, "Your Lord says to you, 'Why do you induce despair in My creatures, so that their hope and longing rebel against them?'"

According to a tradition, "God revealed to Dāwūd, 'Love Me and love whoever loves Me and commends Me to My creatures.' So he said, 'O Lord, how do I commend You to Your creatures?' God said, 'Mention Me for My gracious goodness and commemorate My bounties and well-doing and their recollection of that, for they know Me only as one who is gracious.'"

Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh had a vision in his sleep (he was in the habit of recollecting again and again the categories of hope), and he said, "God halted me in front of Him and said, 'What is it that has spurred you on to this habit?' I said, 'I desired to commend You to Your creatures.' So He said, 'I have pardoned you.'"

Yahyā ibn Aktham was seen in a vision after his death, and it was said to him, "How did God deal with you?" He said, "God halted me in front of Him and said, 'O shaykh, you have repeatedly committed evil.' Then trembling took hold of me with respect to what God might know. Then I said, 'O Lord, this is not the report I had of You.' He asked what was reported to me about Him So I said, "Abd al-Razzāq related to me from Ma'mar, from al-Zuhrī, from Anas, from Your Prophet, from Jibril, that You said, 'I am in accord with what my creature supposes about Me, so let him suppose about Me what he wills.' So I supposed of You that You would not punish me. God said, 'Jibril has spoken the truth, as have My Prophet, Anas, al-Zuhrī, Ma'mar, 'Abd al-Razzāq and you.'

Then I was fitted out with clothes, the two attendants walked before me to Paradise and I exclaimed, 'What joy!'

It is reported in a tradition that there was a man of the children of Israel who was inducing despair in men and was being hard on them. So God said to him, "The Day of Resurrection will be a day on which I will make you despair of My mercy as you have made My creatures despair of it."

The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "A man enters the Fire and remains in it one thousand years, calling out, 'O Gracious One, O Bounteous One.' Then God will say to Jibrīl, 'Go and bring My creature to Me.' So he brings him and halts him beside his Lord, and God asks, 'How did you find your place?' He answers, 'An evil place.' God says, 'Take him back to his place.' So he walks off, turning round. Then God asks, 'Why are you turning round?' He answers, 'I hoped that You would not return me to it after You had brought me out from it.' So God says, "Take him to Heaven." Thus, this story points to his hope being the cause of his salvation. Let us ask for the boon of success through His kindness and favour.

3

The therapy of hope

*K*now that two types of men need this therapy: the man in whom despair has become dominant, so that he has neglected worship, and the man in whom fear has become dominant and who has been extravagant in his perseverance in worship, so that he has done injury to himself and his family. These two examples of men incline away from the equilibrium towards the two extremes of neglect and excess, and so they have need of the treatment which will restore them to the equilibrium.

For the person who is disobedient and self-deceived, who has wishful thoughts of God in spite of his evasion of worship and his blind plunging into deeds of disobedience, the therapeutic properties of hope are, in his case, turned into lethal poison, as is the case with honey, which is a cure for the person who is overcome by cold, but a lethal poison to the person who is overcome by heat. What is more, in the case of the self-deluded person, only the therapeutic properties of fear, along with the means which induce it, can be employed. And, for that reason, it is necessary that there should be persons to preach to the people; and the one who preaches to the people should be benevolently disposed to them, observing the incidence of diseases and treating every disease with its antidote and not with what will aggravate it, for what is sought

after is equilibrium. The optimum state of affairs of the goal with respect to all attributes and moral traits is their mean. When the mean transgresses on one of the two extremes, it is treated with what returns it to the mean, not with what would increase its tendency away from the mean.

The present time is one in which it is not expedient that the means of hope should be employed with the majority of men. Yet an exaggerated employment of threatening, no less, will hardly return them to the highway of truth and the beaten tracks of rectitude. As for the mention of the means of hope, it would cause them to perish and would destroy them totally. But when the means of hope are less burdensome to the heart and more pleasurable to the appetites, the goal of preaching is no more than to sway hearts (i.e., to hope) and make people speak in eulogies, whatever be the reason for their inclining to hope, so that the corrupt increase in corruption and the stubborn in their rebellion through procrastination.

‘Ali said, “The knowledgeable person is simply he who does not make people despair of the mercy of God and does not make them feel secure from the stratagems of God.”

We make mention of the means of hope in order that they may be employed in the case of the despairing man or the one who has been overcome by fear, according to the pattern of the Book of God and the practice (*sunnah*) of His Messenger (s). For both embrace hope and fear in union, since these two unite the means of healing with respect to different kinds of sick people in order that the knowledgeable (*‘ulama’*), who are the heirs of the prophets, may employ one or another of them according to need, just as the discriminating physician would employ them and not the quack who supposes that everything that has therapeutic value will be salutary to every sick person, whatever may be his condition.

The state of hope becomes dominant by means of two things: one is reflection (*i'tibār*),¹ and the other the reciting of the verses of the Qur'an and traditions and reports.² With respect to reflection, man reflects on all that we have mentioned concerning the different kinds of benefits in *The Book of Gratitude* until he knows the kindnesses of the blessings of God to His creatures in this world and the marvels of His wisdom He has disposed in the constitution of man, so that He has furnished for him in this world all that is necessary for him for the maintenance of existence. For example, the means of sustenance and what is necessary for him, such as fingers and nails; what is adornment for him, such as the arching of the eyebrows, the variegation of the colours of the eyes and the redness of the lips; and other such things by the loss of which the goal would not be impaired, but he would miss thereby the attainment of beauty. Since divine providence has not left His creatures deficient in the instances of these minutiae, so that He was not content for His creatures that accessories and refinements in respect of adornment and necessity should be overlooked, how will He take pleasure in driving them to everlasting destruction?

Moreover, when God looked at mankind with the eye of a physician, He knew that the majority of men have at their disposal the means of happiness in this world, so that they dislike transition from this world through death. Even if it were reported that there was never a single instance of a person

1. *I'tibār*. I have also translated "fikr," a technical Sufi term, as "reflection."

2. Al-Ghazālī employs "khabar" to denote "hadīth," which I have translated as "tradition." "Athar" is used of a saying of a Companion or of any other celebrated Muslim, including earlier or contemporary Sufis.

being chastised after death or that there was no gathering (for Judgement), they would dislike death because the means of grace were predominant. The person who wishes for death is simply a rarity, and then even he does not wish for it except in a rare circumstance and an unexpected and unfamiliar contingency. Since the condition of most people in this world is one in which well-being and security prevail, the ways of God (*sunnah Allāh*) do not find a substitute for them. The probability is that the affair of the next world is likewise, for the framer of this world and the next is one; He is forgiving, merciful and kind to His creatures, having compassion for them. So when due reflection is given to this, the means of hope are strengthened thereby.

Also included in reflection is the scrutiny of the wisdom of the Law and its practice in respect of this-worldly benefits, and the aspect of mercy to the creatures which is in it, so that one of the gnostics (*ārifūn*) used to consider the verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah (Qur'an, 2:282) on incurring a debt among the most powerful of the means of hope. It was said to the gnostic, "What is there of hope in it?" He replied, "This present world in its entirety is small, the provision for mankind from it is small and religion is small, separated from His provision. And perceive how God revealed concerning it the longest verse (Qur'an, 2:282) so that He might guide His creature towards being encompassed in the keeping of his religion. And how will his religion not keep him who does not give anything in exchange for it?"

The second kind is the reciting of verses and traditions, and the material which has to do with hope is beyond definition. With regard to verses, He said, "Say, O My creatures who have been profligate against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of God; surely God pardons sins

altogether; He is the Forgiving, the Compassionate" (Qur'an, 39:53). And according to the saying of the Messenger of God, "do not fret; surely He is the Forgiving, the Compassionate."

God says, "And the angels celebrate the praise of their Lord, and ask pardon for those on the earth" (Qur'an, 42:5); "They (enemies) will have layers of fire above them and the layers of fire below them: with this does God warn off His servants: 'O My servants! Then fear you Me'" (Qur'an, 39:16); "Fear the fire prepared for unbelievers" (Qur'an, 3:131); "And therefore do I warn you of a fire blazing fiercely; none will reach it but those most unfortunate ones, and who give the lie to Truth and turn their backs" (Qur'an, 92:14-16); and "But surely your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrongdoing" (Qur'an, 13:6).

It was reported that the Prophet (s) was making petition unceasingly for his people, so it was said to him, "Are you not satisfied that this verse was revealed to you: 'But surely your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrongdoing'?" And by way of interpreting His saying "Surely your Lord will bestow on you and you will be satisfied" (Qur'an, 93:5), the narrator said, "The Messenger of God (s) will not rest content while even one of his people is in the Fire."

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī used to say, "You people of Iraq are saying, 'I hope in the verse in the Book of God, namely His saying 'Say, O my creatures who have been profligate against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of God' to the end of the verse. And we, the people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*), say, 'We hope in the verse in the Book of God, namely His saying 'Surely your Lord will bestow on you and you will be satisfied.'"

There is a tradition related by Abū Mūsā that the Prophet (s) said, "My people are a people to whom mercy has been shown; they will not suffer chastisement in the next world.

God has brought forward their chastisement to this world: earthquakes and factions. When the Resurrection comes round, He will toss to every man of my people a man of the People of the Book, and it will be said, "This is your ransom from the Fire." In another recension, "Every man of this people will take to Hell a Jew or Christian, and he (the Muslim) will say, 'This is my ransom from the Fire,' and he (the ransom) will be cast into it." The Prophet also (s) said, "Heat is from the expanse of Hell, and is an amenity to the believer from the Fire."

In interpreting His saying "on the day when God will not degrade the Prophet and those who believe with him," (Qur'an, 66:8), it is said that God revealed to His Prophet (s), "I am assigning the adjudication of your people to you." The Prophet replied, "No, my Lord, You will deal with them more mercifully than I." So He said, "Then I will not degrade you among them."

It is reported on the authority of Anas that the Messenger of God (s) supplicated to God concerning the sins of his people and said, "O Lord, assign their adjudication to me, so that no one but myself may scrutinise their evil doings." So God revealed to him, "They are your people and they are my creatures, and I am more merciful with them than you. I shall not assign their adjudication to other than Myself, so that neither you nor anyone else may scrutinise their evil deeds."

The Prophet (s) said, "My life is good for you, and my death is good for you. My life, because I lay down for you the practice and frame the Law for you; and my death, because your deeds have been open to me, and for whatever I have seen of them that was good, I have praised God, and I have asked God to pardon you whatever I have seen of evil."³

3. According to al-'Irāqī, he had no knowledge of this *hadīth*.

Once, the Messenger of God (ﷺ) exclaimed, “O generous pardoner (*yā karīm al-‘afw!*)!” So Jibrīl said, “Do you know what ‘generous pardoner’ means? It means ‘He has pardoned evil deeds in mercy; in His generosity He has substituted good deeds for them.’”⁴

The Prophet (ﷺ) heard a man saying, “O Lord, I ask You for the completion of blessing.” So he asked, “Do you know what the completion of blessing is?” He said, “No.” The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “It is entry into Paradise.”

The scholars said, “God completed His blessing for us in His approving Islam for us when He said, ‘I have completed My blessing for you and have approved Islam as your religion.’ (Qur'an, 5:4).”

It is reported in traditions:

“When the creature commits a sin and asks God for pardon, God says to His angels, ‘Observe my creature: He has committed a sin, and he knows that he has a Lord who will pardon and take away his sin. I testify to you that I have pardoned him.’”

“If a creature were to sin so that his sins reached the clouds of the heavens, (God says) ‘I would pardon him in so far as he asked pardon of Me and hoped in Me.’”

(God says,) “If My creature were to meet Me with sins equal to the earth, I would meet him with pardon equal to the earth.”

(God says,) “When the creature sins, the angel holds the reed pen aloft for six hours so as not to make a mark against the creature. If he repents and asks for pardon, he will not record it against him, otherwise he will record it as an evil deed.”

4. According to al-‘Irāqī, not between the Prophet (ﷺ) and Jibrīl but between Ibrāhīm and Jibrīl.

According to another recension of this tradition, “If he performs a good deed after he has recorded it against him, the angel of the right hand says to the angel of the left (for the former has command over the latter),⁵ ‘Cast away the evil deed so that one multiple of ten is cast away from his good deed, and credit to him nine good deeds.’ So the evil deed is cast away from him.”

Anas reported in a tradition that the Prophet (ṣ) said, “When the creature commits a sin, it is recorded against him.” Then a nomadic Arab asked, “If he repents of it?” The Prophet (ṣ) said, “It is erased from him.” “If he returns to sin?” asked the nomad again. The Prophet (ṣ) said, “It is recorded against him.” “And, if he repents?” the nomad Arab asked. The Prophet said, “It is blotted out from his page.” “For how long?” asked the nomad. The Prophet (ṣ) said, “For as long as he begs for pardon and repents to God. Surely God does not grow weary in pardoning until the creature grows weary of begging for pardon. When the creature purposed a good deed, the master of the right hand writes it down as a good deed before he performs it; and if he performs it, he records ten good deeds. Then God multiplies it to seven hundred multiples. When he meditates a sin, it is not recorded against him; and when he performs it, one sin is recorded. Beyond that is the goodness of God’s act of pardon.”

A man came to the Prophet (ṣ) and said, “O Messenger of God, I do not keep any fast except the month of Ramadān without supererogation, I pray only the five prayers without supererogation, I give no voluntary alms in respect of my wealth and there is neither pilgrimage nor obedience beyond what is obligatory⁶ for me. Where am I when I die?” The

5. Cf. Qur'an, 82:10-12.

6. *Taṭawwū'*. See Lane, *in loc.*

Messenger of God smiled and said, "Yes, you are with me, for you have kept your heart from two things—rancour and envy—kept your tongue from two things—slander and falsehood—and kept your eyes from two things—looking at what God has forbidden and condemning a Muslim with them. You will enter Paradise with me because of my rejoicing at these two things."

In a lengthy tradition ascribed to Anas, it is reported that the above-mentioned nomad asked, "O Messenger of God, who will preside over the adjudication of the people?" He said, "God." The nomad continued, "In person?" He said, "Yes." So the nomad smiled and the Prophet (s) said, "Why did you smile?" He said, "Surely, when the Magnanimous One decrees punishment, He pardons, and when He fixes the reckoning, He forgives." So the Prophet (s) said, "The nomad Arab has spoken the truth. There is surely no one more magnanimous than God; He is without peer among those who are magnanimous." Then he added, "The nomad grasped it."

Again, in the same tradition,⁷ it is reported that the Prophet (s) said, "God has ennobled the Ka'bah and made it great, and if a creature should demolish it stone upon stone, then set it ablaze, he has not reached the sin of the person who makes sport of one of the friends of God." The nomad asked, "Who are the friends of God?" He said, "The believers are all friends of God. Have you not heard the saying of God 'God is a friend of those who believe, bringing them out of the shadow into light?' (Qur'an, 2:257)."

Also, there are traditions which say, "The believer is preferred more than the Ka'bah"; "The believer is good and pure"; and "The believer is preferred more than the angels in the sight of God."

7. i.e., the lengthy tradition ascribed to Anas.

According to a tradition, “God created Hell out of the excess of His mercy as a whip. With it God drives His creatures to Paradise.” In another tradition, God says, “I have created men solely so that they might benefit from Me, and I have not created them to exploit them.”

According to a tradition received from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, the Messenger of God said, “God has not created anything which he has not matched with what dominates it, and He has made His mercy to dominate His wrath.” According to another celebrated tradition, “God inscribed mercy on Himself before He created men, saying, ‘My mercy dominates My anger.’”

On the authority of Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal and Anas ibn Mālik, it is reported that the Prophet (ṣ) said, “Whoever says ‘*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*’ (There is no god but God) will enter Paradise, and the Fire will not touch him whose last words are ‘*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*.’ And, if a man encounters God not having associated anything with Him, the Fire is denied access to him. And the person in whose heart is the weight of an atom of faith will not enter it (the Fire).”

According to another tradition ascribed to Abū Hurayrah, the Prophet (ṣ) said, “If the unbeliever knew the spaciousness of the mercy of God, not a single one would despair of His Garden.”

When the Messenger of God recited, “Surely the earthquake of the Hour is a mighty thing” (Qur‘an, 22:1), he said, “Do you know which day this is? This is the day on which it will be said to Adam, ‘Arise and dispatch from among your seed the detachment destined for the Fire.’ He will say, ‘How many?’ And it will be said, ‘Out of every thousand, 999 are for the Fire and one is for Paradise.’” So he made the people despair, and they began to weep and while away their

days in idleness and inactivity. Then the Messenger of God (s) upbraided them and said, "Why do you not work?" They said, "Who would occupy themselves with work after what you have related to us on that point?" The Messenger of God (s) responded, "How many are you among the nations? Where are Tāwil and Thārīth and Mansak and Gog and Magog,⁸ nations whom only God can count? Among the rest of the nations, you are like the white hair on the coat of the black bull or the white mark on the foreleg of the riding beast."

So observe how he was driving the people with the whip of fear and leading them with the reins of hope to God. He drove them with the whip of fear at first, and when that brought them beyond the point of equilibrium to the extreme of despair, he cured them with the therapy of hope and returned them to the equilibrium and the goal. The latter did not contradict the former, but he made mention in the former of what he considered to be a cause of healing and confined himself to that. When they were in need of treatment with hope, he mentioned what completed the matter. It is the responsibility of the preacher to imitate the master of preachers and to be humane in his employment of the traditions of fear and hope in accordance with need, after taking note of the inward defects. If he does not take care to do that, his preaching will promote more disease than it will health.

8. For Gog and Magog, see Ez. xxxviii-xxxix and Rev. xx, 8. In Ezekiel, Gog is probably to be identified as the King of the Scythians, and Magog as the Scythians. But in the context, as also in the book of Revelation, the names are apocalyptic symbols. The other three names which occur here—Tāwil, Thārīth and Mansak—I have not been able to identify with certainty. I would suggest, however, that the solution may be in Gen. X, 2, where Magog is one of the sons of Japheth. Among the other sons are Tūhai, of which Tāwil may be a corruption. Similarly, Meshek = Mansak and Thārīth = Tīrās.

According to a tradition reported by Muslim on the authority of Abū Ayyūb, “if you did not sin, God would create a people who would, and He would pardon them.” Another recension of the same tradition in Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurayrah reads, “He would dismiss you, produce another creation of sinners and pardon them. Surely, He is the Forgiving, the Compassionate.”

According to a tradition reported by al-Bazzāz on the authority of Anas, the Prophet said, “If you did not sin, I would fear for you what is more evil than sins.” It was asked, “What is that?” The Prophet (ṣ) said, “Self conceit.” He said, “By the one in whose hand is my soul, God is more merciful with His creature, the believer, than the tender mother with her offspring.”

According to another tradition reported by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, “God will pardon on the Day of Resurrection with a pardon that has not occurred to a single heart, so that even the Devil will strain towards it in the hope that it may impinge on him.”⁹

Also, there is a tradition narrated by Abū Hurayrah and reported in al-Bukhārī and Muslim which reads, “God possesses a hundred mercies. Of these, He has stored ninety-nine with Himself and has revealed one mercy in this present world. By virtue of it, men show compassion to each other, the mother is compassionate to her child and the beast shows affection to its offspring. When the Day of Resurrection comes, He will join this mercy to the ninety-nine. Then He will spread them out on all His creation, each mercy being equal to the heavens and the earth, and only the child of perdition will perish at the hand of God at that time.”

9. In *Kitāb Husn al-Zānn bi Allāh*, on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd, with a weak *isnād*.

Also, there is a tradition by Abū Hurayrah and reported in al-Bukhārī and Muslim in which the Messenger of God said, "There is not a single person among you whose work will give him entrance to Paradise or will save him from the Fire." It was said, "Not you either, O Messenger of God?" He said, "Not me either unless God covers me with His mercy." He added, "Labour, be of good courage and know that no man's works will save him."

The Prophet (ṣ) said, "I have reserved my intercession for the great sinners among my people. Do you think it is for the submissive and the pious? No, it is for the warped and the dissolute." He also said, "I am sent with the true religion which is both accommodating and conciliatory."

Again, he said, "I desire that the people of the two books should know that in our religion there is accommodation." Indicating this meaning is the reply which God gave to the believers when they said, "And lay not on us a burden" (Qur'an, 2:286), and His saying "He relieves them of their burdens and shackles which were on them" (Qur'an, 7:157).

Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah related on the authority of 'Alī that he said, "When He revealed, 'Be magnanimous on a handsome scale' (Qur'an, 15:85), the Prophet (ṣ) said, 'O Jibrīl, what is a handsome magnanimity?' He (Jibrīl) answered, 'When you have pardoned whoever has wronged you, do not upbraid him.' So he (the Prophet (ṣ)) said, 'O Jibrīl, God is too magnanimous to upbraid the one whom He has forgiven.' So Jibrīl wept, and the Prophet wept, and God sent to them Mikā'il, who said, 'Your Lord sends both of you His compliments and says, 'How would I upbraid the one whom I have pardoned? This would not be like My magnanimity.'"

The traditions which have to do with the means of hope are more than can be numbered.

As for the reports, 'Ali said, "If a man commits a sin over which God puts a cover in this world, He is too magnanimous to withdraw His covering in the next world. If a man commits a sin and is punished for it in this world, God is too equitable to repeat His punishment on His creature in the next world."

Sufyān al-Thawrī said, "I do not desire that He should assign my adjudication to my parents, because I know that God will deal more mercifully with me than they will."

One of the early Muslims (*salaf*) said, "When the believer is disobedient, God covers him from the sight of the angels so that they do not see him and testify against him."

Muhammad ibn Sa'b¹⁰ wrote to Aswad ibn Sālim in his own hand, "When the creature is profligate and lifts his hands, praying and calling 'O Lord!' the angels screen his voice; thus the second and third time. When he says 'O Lord!' the fourth time, God says, 'How long will you screen from Me the voice of My creature? My creature knows that he has no Lord who will pardon sins but Me. I testify to you that I have pardoned him.'"

Ibrāhīm ibn Adham said, "I was performing the circumambulation in solitude on a dark and rainy night. I halted at the obligatory place beside the gate and said, 'O my Lord, keep me from sin so that I am never disobedient to You.' A disembodied voice called out to me from the House,¹¹ 'O Ibrāhīm, you are asking Me to keep you from sin, and all My believing creatures seek that from Me. But if I keep them from sin, on whom should I bestow My bounty and to whom should I grant pardon?'"

Al-Hasan (al-Baṣrī) used to say, "If the believer had not sinned, he would have been flying in the kingdoms of the heavens, but God has held him down by his sins."

10. "Sa'b" in 1939 ed. is "Mus'ab," which is correct, in 1908 ed. .
11. i.e., the Ka'bah.

Al-Junayd said, "If a speck of nobility were visible, it would annex the evildoers to the welldoers."

Mālik ibn Dīnār met Abān and said to him, "For how much longer will you tell the people about the indulgences of God?" So he said, "O Abū Yahyā, I hope that what you see of God's pardon on the Day of Resurrection will make you rend your clothes for joy."

In an account of Rab'i ibn Harrāsh concerning his brother, who was among the most elect of those who personally learnt from one or more of the Companions (*tābi'ūn*) and was one of those who conversed after death, he said, "When my brother died, he was wrapped in his shroud, and we laid him in his bier. Then he threw back the shroud from his face, sat upright and said, 'I encountered my Lord, and He greeted me with affability and delight, and was anything but angry. I experienced the affair as something easier than you suppose, so do not flag. Now the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) and his Companions are expecting me, so I shall return to them.' Then he prostrated himself, and it was as if a pebble had fallen into a dish, and so we bore him off and buried him."

In the account of two men of the children of Israel who were brothers in God, and one of them was profligate and the other a devotee, the latter used to warn the former and chide him, and so the other would say, "Leave me alone. By my Lord, are you delegated to me as a watchman?" This went on until the devotee saw him on a certain day in the act of committing a great sin, grew angry and said, "God will not pardon you." The profligate replied, "God will say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Is anyone able to debar My mercy from My creatures? Go your way, for I have pardoned you.' Then He will say to the devotee, 'As for you, the Fire is decreed for you.'" He (the narrator) said, "By the one in whose hand is my

soul, He has spoken a word which has destroyed his present world and his next world."

It is also reported that a robber was pillaging the highway among the children of Israel for forty years, and 'Isā passed by him, accompanied by one of his disciples. So the robber said to himself, "The prophet of God is passing, and his disciple is accompanying him. If I were to go down, I would be a third with the two of them." So he went down and was moved with the desire to draw near to the disciple. Demeaning himself and magnifying the disciple, he said to himself, "One like myself may not walk at the side of this devotee." The disciple sensed his presence and said to himself, "This man is walking at my side." So he braced himself, caught up 'Isā and walked at his side, the robber remaining behind him. So God revealed to 'Isā, "Say to them both, 'The works of both of you are under review, and I have annulled whatever proceeded from your respective works. I have annulled the good works of the disciple because of his pride in himself, and I have annulled the evil works of the other, according to the measure of his disparagement of himself. So give these tidings to both of them.'" The robber joined himself to him (i.e., 'Isā) in his itinerary, and 'Isā made him one of his disciples.

It is related on the authority of Masrūq that one of the prophets was prostrating himself when an apostate trod on his neck, so that the pebbles adhered to his forehead. So the prophet raised his head in rage and said, "Be off with you! God will certainly not pardon you!" So God revealed to him, "You are taking My name in vain in respect of My creatures. Surely I have pardoned him."

Similar to this is what is related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, namely that the Messenger of God was inducing despair in the polytheists and was cursing them in his prayer,

and so God revealed to him, “Not for you (but for God) is the decision whether He turn in mercy or punish them, for they are indeed wrong doers” (Qur'an, 3:128). So he desisted from the prayer in which he was imprecating them, and God guided the body of those people to Islam.

It is related in a report that there were two devotees equal in devotion. When they entered Paradise, one of them was elevated to the highest degrees over his companion. The latter said, “O Lord in what way did this man exceed me in devotion on the earth, so that You have elevated him over me in the highest Heaven.” So God said, “While he was on the earth, he was continually asking for the highest degrees, while you were asking for salvation from the Fire. So I have given every creature his request.”

This is a pointer to the fact that worship which is on account of hope is the more meritorious, because love dominates the person who hopes more than it does the one who fears. What a distinction is made by kings between the person who serves through fear of their punishment, and the one who serves out of the hope of their favours and magnanimity! On that account God has enjoined optimism. Moreover, the Prophet (s) said, “Ask God for the highest degrees, for you are asking one who is magnanimous.” He said, “When you ask God, set the target high and ask for the highest Paradise, for God will not think anything too great for him who asks.”

Bakr ibn Salīm al-Şawwāf said, “We came into the presence of Mālik ibn Anas on the evening he was taken away by death, and we said, ‘O Abū ‘Abdullāh, how are you?’ He said, “I do not know what to say to you except that you will find in the pardon of God what you did not expect.” Then we did not stir until we had closed his eyes (i.e., in death).

Yahyā ibn Mu‘ādh said in his supplication, “My hoping in You along with my sins is greater than my hoping in You along with my good works. With respect to works, I rely on single-mindedness. But how shall I preserve it when I am known to be with blemish? And I find myself with respect to my sins relying on Your pardon. But how will You not pardon them when magnanimity is Your attribute?”

It is said a Zoroastrian requested hospitality from Ibrāhīm, the Friend of God, so he said, “If you become a Muslim, I will show you hospitality. The Zoroastrian therefore carried on, and God revealed to him Ibrāhīm, “You would not give him food except with his religion changed, and We have fed him for seventy years, notwithstanding his unbelief. If you had shown him hospitality for a night, what responsibility would have fallen on you?” So Ibrāhīm set off running after the Zoroastrian, brought him back and showed him hospitality. The Zoroastrian said to him, “By what means did it become plain to you?” He told him, and the Zoroastrian said to him, “Does He deal with me thus? Explain Islam to me so that I may become a Muslim.”¹²

Abū Sahl al-Šu‘lūkī saw Abū Sahl al-Zajjājī in a dream, and he was speaking about the threat of everlasting punishment. So he (al-Šu‘lūkī) said to him, “How do you feel?” He said, “I find the affair easier than I had contemplated.”

A certain individual saw Abū Sahl al-Šu‘lūkī in a dream, indescribably fair in appearance. He said to him, “O teacher, by what means did you obtain this?” He replied, “Through supposing the best of my Lord.”

It is related that during his mortal illness, Abū al-‘Abbās ibn Sarij had a dream in which it seemed as though the Resurrection had actualised, and the Almighty said, “Where are the scholars?” He said, “So they came. Then He said, ‘What

12. Cf. Acts viii, 34 f.

have you accomplished with what you knew?' We said, 'O Lord, we have come short and have done evil.' He repeated the interrogation as if He were not satisfied with the answer but desired another answer. So I said, 'As for me, there is no polytheism on my page, and You have promised that You will pardon whatever does not partake of it.' He said, 'Take him away, for I have pardoned you (all).'" He died three nights later.

It is said there was a drunkard who gathered a party of his cronies and tossed to his servant four dirhams, bading him buy some fruit for his party. The servant passed by the door of the sitting room of Manṣūr ibn 'Ammār while he was begging something for a poor man and saying, "Whoever tosses him four dirhams, I shall offer four petitions for him." So the boy tossed the dirhams to him, and Manṣūr asked, "What is it you desire that I should ask for you?" He said, "I have a master from whom I desire to be released." So Manṣūr prayed, and then he asked him to state his next request. The servant said, "That God would replace my dirhams." So he prayed and then asked for the next. "That God would bring my master to repentance," said the servant. So Manṣūr prayed, and then he asked, "What next?" He said, "That God would pardon me, my master, you and the multitude." So Manṣūr prayed and the servant returned. His master asked him what detained him, so he told the tale to his master. He said, "What did he pray about?" He said he asked freedom for himself. So he said to him, "Go your way, for you are a free man." He asked, "What was the second prayer?" He said, "That God would replace the dirhams." He said, "You possess four thousand dirhams. What was the third prayer?" He said, "That God would bring you to repentance." He said, "I have repented to God. And what was the fourth prayer?" He said, "That God would pardon me, you,

the multitude and him who said the prayer." He said, "This one is not in my power." That night, he had a dream in which it seemed as though someone said to him, "You have done what was in your power. Do you then think that I shall not do what is in My power? I have pardoned you, the servant, Maṣṣūr ibn 'Ammār and the crowd which was present—all of them."

'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Thaqafī related that he saw three men and a woman bearing a bier. He said, "So I took the place of the woman, we went off to the cemetery, we prayed over the corpse and we buried it. I said to the woman, 'What was the relationship of the deceased man to you?' She said, 'My son.' I said, 'Did you not have any neighbours?' She said, 'Yes, but they despised his condition.' I asked what it was. She said, 'He was a *mukhannath*'.¹³ So I had compassion on her, brought her to my house and gave her money and corn and clothes. That night I had a dream. It was as if someone came to me on the night of a full moon, wearing white robes. He began to thank me, and I said, 'Who are you?' He said, 'The *mukhannath* whom you buried today. My Lord had compassion on me because people condemned me.'"

Ibrāhīm al-Ūtrūsh said, "We were in Baghdad with Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, sitting by the Tigris, when some youths passed by in skiffs, beating with the oars and drinking and jesting. They said to Ma'rūf, 'Do you not see them disobeying God with obscene jests? Pray to God against them.' He lifted his hands and said, 'O God, as You have given them joy in this world, give them joy in the next world.' The group said, 'All we asked of you was to pray against them.' So he said, 'If He brings them joy in the next world, He will have forgiven them.'"

13. A *mukhannath* is a male who dances so as to simulate a female.

One of the *salaf* used to say in his petitions, "O Lord, what people were there ever who did not disobey You, yet Your favour to them was bounteous and Your provision lavish? Praise be to You. How clement You are! By Your might, if disobedience is shown to You, You bestow favour in plenty and are lavish with provision, so that it is as if, O our Lord, You were not angry."

These are the means by which the relief of hope is induced in the hearts of the fearful and despairing. As for the foolish and self-deluded, it is not expedient that they should hear anything of that; no, they are to hear what we shall cite of the means of fear. For most people are not made healthy except through fear, just as the bad servant and the naughty boy are not reformed except through the whip and the stick and speech with an explicit threat. But the opposite of that would close on them the door of health with respect to religion and this world.

PART II
Fear

In it is an exposition of the essence of fear, of the degrees of fear, of the divisions of the objects of fear, of the merit of fear, of whether fear or hope is the optimum, of the therapy of fear, of the Evil End and of the states of those among the prophets and the sound in faith who had fear. Let us ask God for good success.

1

The essence of fear

*K*now that fear is an expression for the suffering of the heart and its conflagration by means of the anticipation of what is abhorred as a future contingency. This has been made clear in the exposition of the essence of hope. Whoever is intimate with God, whose heart is ruled by truth and who lives in the present through his seeing the majesty of truth perpetually no longer turns to the future and is possessed of neither fear nor hope. Moreover, his state has become higher than fear or hope, for both of these are reins which preclude the soul from its excursions into laxness. Al-Wāṣīṭī has indicated this in saying, “Fear is a veil between God and the creature” and “When the truth makes plain the things which are secret, there remains in them no residue for hope and fear.”

In general, if the heart of the lover is distracted by fear of separation while viewing his beloved, that would indicate a deficiency of vision, as the goal of the stations is simply constancy of vision. But for the present, we are to discuss only the initial stations, and so we shall say that the state of fear can also be classified in terms of knowledge, state and action.

With regard to knowledge, it is knowledge of the cause which leads to the thing which is abhorred, so that it is as if someone committed a crime against a king, fell into

his hands and feared that he would be put to death as an example, although pardon and escape were possibilities. But the suffering of his heart through fear is in proportion to the strength of his knowledge of the means which would lead to his being put to death, such as the enormity of his crime and the fact that the king in himself is rancorous, wrathful, revengeful, surrounded by such as incite him to take vengeance and isolated from such as would intercede with him in his case, and also the absence of any merit or virtue that might wipe out the trace of his crime with the king. Hence the knowledge of the true nature of these possible means to escape punishments is a cause of the fear and the rigour of the suffering of the heart.

Fear is faint in proportion to the weakness of those means. It may be that fear derives not from the crime which the person who fears has committed, but from the nature of the object feared. Take, for example, the person who falls into the claws of the lion. He fears the lion because of the nature of the lion itself, namely that for the most part, it is avid and violent in pouncing on its prey. Even if its pouncing on its prey were within the province of choice, it might seem to the person threatened by it to be due to inborn disposition. Similarly, the person who falls into the path of a torrent or into a blazing pit fears the water because it is endowed by nature with the power of flowing and drowning, and fears the fire because it is endowed with the power of burning. The knowledge of the means of the thing which is abhorred is the cause which initiates and fans the conflagration and suffering of the heart, and that conflagration is fear.

In like manner, fear of God may sometimes be due to knowledge of God and of His attributes, that if He destroyed the worlds, He would not care and no person would obstruct

Him. Sometimes it may be due to the multitude of the sins of the creature through his committing deeds of disobedience, and sometimes it may be due to both of them together. The strength of his fear will be in proportion to his knowledge of his own defects, of the majesty of God, of His self-subsistence and that He will not be asked about what He does, while they will be asked. The person most filled with fear in respect of His Lord is the man who has the most knowledge of himself and his Lord. For that reason the Prophet (s) said, "I am the one who fears God the most among you." In addition, God said, "Only the knowledgeable among his creatures fear God" (Qur'an, 35:28).

Then, when knowledge is perfected, the majesty of fear and the conflagration of the heart are produced. Then the trace of the conflagration flows from the heart into the body, the members and the attributes.

Traces in the body include emaciation, pallidness, fainting, shrieking and weeping. It may be that in this way bitterness is inhaled, leading to death, or it goes up to the brain and rots the intelligence, or it intensifies in strength and produces despair and hopelessness.

Traces in the members include one's restraining them from disobedience and binding them to deeds of obedience in order to repair what is defective and prepare for the future. In this regard, it is said, "The man who fears is not he who weeps and wipes his eyes; no, it is he who forsakes that on whose account he fears punishment." Abū al-Qāsim al-Hakīm said, "Whoever fears anything flees from it, and whoever fears God flees to Him." When Dhū al-Nūn was asked, "When is the servant fearful?" He said, "When he brings himself down to the level of the sick man who is abstemious for fear that his sickness may be prolonged."

Traces in the attributes include one's stifling the lusts and blackening the pleasures, so that the disobediences he was fond of become abhorrent, just as honey becomes abhorrent to the man who desires it when he knows that there is poison in it. So the lusts are burned up by fear; the members are trained; self-abasement, humility, submissiveness and lowliness grow in the heart; and pride, rancour and envy leave it.

Moreover, he is absorbed with concern through his fear and his observing the peril of its sequel, having no leisure for other than it. He has no preoccupation but vigilance, self-examination, spiritual combat, conserving breaths and glances and repreending the soul for suggestions and footsteps¹ and words (i.e., of Satan). His condition is that of the man who falls into the claws of a harmful lion and does not know whether it will ignore him and he will escape, or it will pounce on him and he will perish. So he will be engrossed outwardly and inwardly with what he fears, and there will be no room in him for anything else.

This is the state of the person over whom fear has prevailed and gained the mastery. The state of the Companions and their students (*tabi'ūnī*) was thus. The strength of vigilance, self-examination and spiritual combat is in proportion to the strength of fear, which is the suffering of the heart and its conflagration. The strength of fear is in proportion to the strength of knowledge of the majesty of God, His attributes and His actions, and in proportion to the defects of the soul and the perils and terrors which confront it.

The least of the degrees of fear whose trace is visible in actions is the blocking of access to the forbidden. The restraint which excludes the forbidden is called "abstinence."

1. Cf. Qur'an, 2:166, 208; 6:142; 24:21.

If its strength increases, it restrains from what directs at it the possibility of the forbidden, and hence also from that whose forbiddance is not a matter of certainty, which is called “piety,” since piety is the forsaking of that which one suspects in order to arrive at what one does not suspect. It may urge a man on to forsake what has no evil in it for fear of what has evil in it, and this is sincere piety. When fully consecrated worship is joined to it, the consequence is that one neither builds what he does not inhabit, gathers what he does not eat, nor turns to this world, since he knows that it will abandon him, nor expends a single breath except towards God.

This is sincerity, and its owner is worthy to be named “sincere” (*ṣiddīq*). Piety enters into sincerity, abstinence into piety, and chastity into abstinence, for chastity is a specialised expression for being cut off from the determinism of lusts. Therefore, fear is effective in the members through restraint and perseverance, and it is in virtue of restraint that it is given the new term “chastity” which is refraining from the determinism of lusts. Abstinence is higher than it because it is more universal and is refraining from everything forbidden.

Higher than it is piety, since it is the word for refraining from the sum of things forbidden and dubious. Beyond it are the words “sincere” and “one brought near” (*muqarrab*). The course of the most ultimate rank in relation to what precedes it is from the most general to the most particular, for when you have mentioned the most particular, you have mentioned the whole. It is as if you were saying “mankind,” whether Arab or non-Arab; “Arab,” whether Qurayshī or non-Qurayshī; “Qurayshī,” whether Hāshimī or non-Hāshimī; “Hāshimī,” whether ‘Alawī or non-‘Alawī; and “‘Alawī,” whether Ḥasanī or Husaynī. When you have mentioned, for example, that a man is Ḥasanī, you have described him by all these terms, and

if you describe him as “Alawī,” you describe him by a higher and more general category than “Hasanī.”

Similarly, when I have said “sincere,” I have said that a man is pious, abstemious and chaste. There is no need for you to suppose that these numerous names point to numerous dissimilar meanings, for that would reduce you to confusion, just as confusion reigns over whoever seeks different meanings from linguistic variants, where the meanings have not followed the variants.

So this shows the concert of the meanings of fear, what surrounds it on the higher side—such as the knowledge which determines it—and what surrounds it on the lower side—such as the actions which derive from it through restraint and perseverance.

2

The degrees of fear

*K*now that fear is commendable. Often it is supposed that all fear is commendable, and that the more powerful and frequent it is, the more it is commendable. This is a fallacy. Fear, rather, is the whip of God by which He drives His creatures towards perseverance in knowledge and action so that by means of both of these they may obtain the rank of nearness to God. What is most salutary for the beast is that it should not escape the whip, and thus with the boy, but that does not imply that excessive beating is commendable.

Such is the case with fear, which has deficiency and equilibrium, and what is commendable is the equilibrium and the mean. The person who is deficient in it is he who tends towards effeminate softness which alights on his mind: Whenever he hears a verse from the Qur'an, he weeps and his tears overflow.

The same happens when he sees a cause of terror. When that cause is absent from his attention, his heart returns to negligence. So this is a fear which is deficient of profit and of feeble utility. Just like the slight stick with which the powerful riding animal is beaten, which does not give it serious pain, does not urge it on to the destination and is not salutary for its correction.

Such is the fear of all men except the gnostics ('*ārifūn*) and the knowledgeable ('*ulamā*). By "the knowledgeable" I do not mean those who are stamped with the marks of scholars or are called by their names,¹ for they of all men are the most distant from fear. Here I mean those who are knowledgeable concerning God, His days and His actions. Existence of such men is rare at the present time. Thus, al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyād said, "When you are asked, 'Do you fear God?' keep silent, for if you say no, you are an unbeliever, and if you say yes, you are a liar." He indicated by this that it is fear that restrains the members from deeds of disobedience and binds them to deeds of obedience, and whatever does not take effect in the members is no more than an impulse² and a fleeting motion, which do not deserve the word "fear."

The extremist is he whose fear is strong and transgresses the limit of the equilibrium, so that it goes out towards hopelessness and despair. It is also reprehensible because it stultifies action. Fear may also issue in sickness, weakness, depression, bewilderment and intellectual atrophy. The aim of fear is the same as the aim of the whip, which is to incite to action. If it is otherwise, fear is imperfect because it is deficient in its essence, since its product is ignorance and impotence. Its product is ignorance because one does not know the sequel of his affair, and if he knew he would not be afraid, since the thing which is feared is that about which there is doubt. And its product is impotence because he is exposed to a forbidden thing which he is unable to repel. Therefore, fear is commendable in connection with human deficiencies, but only knowledge is commendable in itself and its essence,

1. i.e., in using "*ulamā*," he is not referring to the class of scholars who bear that name.

2. *Hadīth al-nafs*.

together with power and everything by which it is possible to describe God. That by which it is not possible to describe God is not perfect in its essence and only becomes commendable in connection with a deficiency which is greater than it, just as the enduring of therapeutic pain is commendable because it is milder than the pain of disease and death.

Whatever comes out of despair is reprehensible. Fear also may issue in disease, weakness, depression, bewilderment intellectual atrophy and even death. All that is reprehensible is like the beating which kills a boy and to the whip which slays a riding animal, makes it ill or breaks one of its limbs.

The Messenger of God (s) mentioned the means of hope and multiplied them simply in order that he might thereby treat the shock of excessive fear, which leads to despair or one of these conditions, and all that is implied with respect to a condition. The commendable part of it is whatever leads to the goal which is intended by it, and whatever comes short of it or goes beyond it is reprehensible. The benefit of fear is caution, abstinence, piety, spiritual combat, worship, reflection,³ recollection and all the means that bring about union with God. And all of that requires life along with health of body, wholeness of intellect and whatever impairs these means is reprehensible.

If you say, "Whoever fears and dies because of his fear is a martyr," then how can his state be reprehensible? Know that the meaning of his being a martyr is that he possesses a rank in virtue of his death through fear, a rank which he would not have attained had he died at that time through a cause other than fear, so that in connection with him it is meritorious, but in connection with the ordering of his survival, the

3. Translating "fikr." cf. p. 18. n. 1.

prolongation of his life in obedience to God and the treading of His paths, it is not meritorious.

Rather, the person who is making a pilgrimage to God by the path of reflection,⁴ spiritual combat and the ascent of the degrees of knowledge possesses at every instant the rank of martyr and martyrs. Were it otherwise, the rank of a lad who is killed or the madman whom a lion mauls would be higher than the rank of a prophet or saint who dies a natural death, and this would be absurd. Nor is it proper that this should be supposed. Instead, the most valued of blessings is prolongation of life in obedience to God, and everything which annuls life, mind or health (for life is impaired when it is impaired) is a loss and deprivation in relation to some conditions, even if some parts of it should have merit in relation to other conditions, just as martyrdom has merit in relation to what is below it, not in relation to the degree of the pious and the sincere.

So if fear does not effect action, its existence and non-existence are alike, just as the whip which does not accelerate the speed of the riding animal. If it is effective, it has degrees according to the visibility of its effect, for if it is an incentive only to chastity, it is the restraining from the determinism of lusts, so that it possesses a degree. If it produces abstinence, it is higher in degree. The most ultimate of its degrees is that it should produce the degrees of the sincere, which is that it should tear one away outwardly and inwardly from what is other than God, so that there remains in him no room for other than God. This is the most ultimate of its commendable characteristics and is accompanied with preservation of health and mind.

4. Translating “*fikr*,” cf. p. 18. n. 1.

If it goes beyond this towards the atrophy of mind and health, it is sickness which must be treated, provided there is an effectual treatment. If it were commendable, its treatment by hope and other means until it passes away would not be necessary. For this reason Sahl used to say to novices who persisted with fasting over a long period, "Keep your wits. God has never had a saint who was mentally deficient."

3

The divisions of fear

*K*now that fear does not deserve the name except when it concerns the expectation of what is abhorred, whether it is abhorred in its essence, such as fire, or because it leads to what is abhorred, such as deeds of disobedience, which lead to what is abhorred in the next world, just as the invalid abhors fruits which do him injury because they lead to death. So everyone who fears is bound to picture himself an abhorred thing from one of the two divisions, and the expectation of it grows powerful in his heart, so that his heart is burnt up through his terror of the abhorred thing.

The station of those who fear is differentiated in accordance with the kind of abhorred things whose dread dominates their hearts. So there are those whose hearts are dominated by what is not essentially abhorred, but abhorred because of what is outside itself, such as those who are dominated by the fear of death before repentance; or a fear of a deficiency of repentance and a breaking of the covenant;¹ or the fear of a diminishing of strength so as not to fulfil the complete demands of God; or the fear that the tenderness of the heart will pass away and that it will be replaced by hardness; or the fear of inclining away from uprightness; or the fear of the mastery of custom

1. Cf. Qur'an, 7:130-131; 48:10.

in the following of the familiar lusts; or the fear that God will entrust a man to his good works in which he has put his trust and which he has boasted about among God's creatures; or the fear of taking God for granted by reason of the multitude of God's favours to him; or the fear of being distracted from God by other than God; or the fear of being deceived by the regular succession of favours; or the fear that the defections of his obedience will be uncovered where there is revealed to him from God what he did not take into account; or the fear that people will persecute him with back-biting, perfidy, dissimulation and premeditated thoughts of evil; or the fear of his lack of knowledge of what may happen in the remainder of his life; or the fear of punishment² being brought forward to this world and his being disgraced before death; or the fear of being deceived by the blandishments of this world; or the fear that God will scrutinise his secret heart at a moment when he is heedless of Him; or the fear of being sealed at death with the Evil End; or the fear of the predestination which has been predestined to him from all eternity.

All these are things which gnostics fear, and there is that which is particularly advantageous to everyone, which is the treading of the path of caution so as to exclude what leads to the thing feared. And so whoever fears the mastery of custom over him will persevere in weaning himself from custom. Whoever fears that God will scrutinise his secret heart, occupies himself with the purifying of his heart from the whisperings of Satan. And thus with the remainder of the divisions.

Among those fears, the one which most overcomes assurance is the fear of the End, for its affair is full of danger.

2. The reference may be specifically to the punishment ('adhāb) or chastisement of the grave which takes place after the interrogation by Munkar and Nakir, although the word used is "uqūbah."

The highest of all the divisions and the one which gives best access to perfection of knowledge is the fear of predestination, because the End follows from what has been predestined, and is a branch which springs from it in accordance with the interaction of many causes. So the End makes manifest what the eternal decree has predestined in the essence³ of the Book.

The relation of one who fears the End to the one who fears predestination is like that of two men in judgement of whom the king has signed a decree, the import of which might be their beheading or the assigning to them of a ministry. The decree was not yet delivered to them and the heart of one was tied up with the circumstance of the delivery of the decree and its publication and what it would disclose; and the heart of the other was tied up with the circumstance of the decree of the king, its nature and what it was that had passed through his mind at the moment of the decree, of mercy or of anger. This was to turn towards the cause which is a higher activity than to turn towards what is a corollary. Likewise, to turn towards the eternal decree which the Pen has signed is higher than turning towards what is made manifest in the end.

The Prophet (s) indicated this when he was on the pulpit and clenched his right hand, saying, "This is the Book of God in which He has written the people of Paradise with their names and the names of their fathers, of which there will be no increase and no diminution." Then he clenched his left hand and said, "This is the Book of God in which He has written the people of the Fire with their names and the names of their fathers, of which there will be no increase and no

3. Or "prototype"; "essence" in the sense of "verses of the Qur'an whose meaning is unambiguous" is an appropriate translation of "*umm*" (literally "mother") in Qur'an, 3:7. Qur'an, 13:39, on the other hand, might support "prototype."

diminution. Let the people of bliss do the works of the people of woe, so that it is said, 'It is as if they were numbered with them; moreover, they are identical with them.' Then God will save them before death, even if it is in the time between two milkings of a she-camel. He who is numbered among the blessed is so by the decree of God, as is the reprobate by the decree of God, and works are in the nature of Seals."

This accords with the division of those who fear into the person who fears his disobedience and sin, and the one who fears God in person because of His attributes, majesty and characteristics which, without a doubt, compel awe. So this fear is the highest in rank, and, for that reason, his fear endures, even if he enters into the obedience of the sincere.

As for the other, it is in the target area⁴ of self-deception, and the safest part of it is if one perseveres in obedience. So fear of disobedience is the fear of those who are sound in faith, and the fear of God is that of the monotheists and the sincere. It is the fruit of knowledge concerning God, and whoever knows Him and knows His attributes knows from His attributes how He is worthy to be feared apart altogether from sin. What is more, if the disobedient person knew God as he ought to know Him, he would fear God and would not fear his disobedience. Were it not that He is to be feared in His person, He would not constrain him to disobedience, smooth its path for him and prepare its means, for the facilitating of the means of disobedience is alienation. He has not committed disobedience prior to his present disobedience in virtue of which he deserves to be constrained to disobedience and to have access to its means. Nor is obedience preceded by merit in virtue of which favour is shown to him for whom obedience

4. Reading 1908, عرضة 1939 for.

is made easy and the path of communion is smoothed. For the disobedient person has had disobedience decreed to him, whether he wills it or not; and thus with the obedient person. He who exalts the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) to the highest Heaven irrespective of merit which he had acquired prior to its taking place, and abases Abū Jahl in the lowest Hell irrespective of sins which he had committed prior to its taking place, is worthy to be feared for His attribute of majesty.

For whoever obeys God obeys because the will to obedience has dominion over him and power comes to him, and after the creation of the irrevocable will and the complete power, the action comes into being of necessity. He who is disobedient is so because a powerful and irrevocable will has dominion over him, and the means and power come to him, and the action, in the wake of the will and the power, is of necessity. Would that I knew what it is that determines the preferment of this man and his being singled out through the dominion which the will to obedience has over him; what it is that determines the abasement of that man and his alienation through the dominion which the impulses of disobedience have over him; and how this is transferred to the creature! But since the transfer goes back to the eternal decree, irrespective of sin or merit, fear of the one who decrees as He wills and legislates as He desires is a resolution with every intelligent person. Beyond this meaning is the secret of predestination, whose dissemination is not permissible.

The understanding of the fear of Him in respect of His attributes is not possible except by parable. Were it not for the permission of the Law, the man of insight would not have dared to mention it. So it has come down in a tradition, "God revealed to Dāwūd, 'Fear Me as you fear the harmful lion.'" This is a parable which lets you understand what the effect of

the meaning is, even if it does not acquaint you with its cause. For to be acquainted with its cause is to be acquainted with the secret of predestination, and He does not disclose that except to His people.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the lion is to be feared not because of the sin which you have previously committed against it, but because of its characteristics, its violence, rapaciousness, arrogance and awfulness, and because it does what it wills and does not care. For if it killed you, its heart would be untouched by compunction, and it would feel no pain at killing you. If it left you alone, it would not leave you out of pity for you or to preserve your breath. Rather, you are in its sight too insignificant for it to notice you, whether dead or alive. In addition, with it the killing of a thousand like you and the killing of a gnat are on one plane, since that does not impugn the animal kingdom or the power and rapaciousness attributed to it.

The parable has its highest application to God. Whoever knows Him knows with inward sight which is more powerful, trustworthy and transparent than outward sight. He speaks the truth in His saying "These to Paradise and I do not care; and these to the Fire and I do not care." Of the things which compel awe and fear, knowing that He is self-subsistent and does not care will suffice you.

As for the second class of those who fear, the thing abhorred is pictured within them, such as the image of the pangs of death and its rigours; or the interrogation of Munkar and Nakir;⁵ or the punishment of the grave; or the terror of the Resurrection;⁶ or the awfulness of the halting place before

5. A fuller account of these eschatological events is given by al-Ghazālī in "The Testification of Faith," *Iḥyā'.*

6. Or "ascent." Translating "matlā'."

God and shame because of the drawing back of the veil and the interrogation about the smallest details;⁷ or the fear of the Bridge, its edge and the manner of crossing over it; or the fear of the Fire, its shackles and terrors; or the fear of being banned from Paradise, the House of Bliss, the enduring Kingdom and a diminution of degrees; or the fear of being veiled from God.

All these means are abhorred in themselves and are, indubitably, to be feared. The states of those who fear are differentiated, and the highest of them in rank is the fear of alienation and of being veiled from God—this is the fear of the gnostics. What comes before this is the fear of the practicing ('āmilūn), those who have sound faith (*sālihūn*), ascetics (*zāhidūn*) and people in general. He whose knowledge is not perfect and whose inner sight is not opened up does not feel the pleasure of union nor the pain of alienation and separation. When it is mentioned to him that the gnostic does not fear the Fire but fears only the veil, he finds that inwardly repugnant and marvels at it in his soul. It may be that he would find repugnant the pleasure of looking at the face of God, the Magnanimous One, were it not that the Law precludes him from being repugnant to it. His confessing it with the tongue derives from the compulsion of authority. Were it otherwise, it would not be inwardly vouched for because he “knows” only the pleasure of the stomach, of sexual intercourse and of the eye (when he looks at colours and fair faces), and, in general, every pleasure in which the beasts are his associates. As for the pleasure of gnostics, they only attain to it, and its classification

7. “*Naqīr*” and “*Qiṭmīr*.” *Naqīr* (Qur'an, 4:53) “single date-spot” (Arberry). *Qiṭmīr* (Qur'an, 35:13) “skin of a date stone” (Arberry). I take this to be idiomatic for an interrogation which extends to the smallest detail. It thus probably corresponds to the mention of the Reckoning (*hisāb*) in *Iḥyā*'.

and exposition are forbidden to whoever is not a party to it. Whoever is a party to it possesses the insight, and so he does not need someone else to expound it to him. The fear of those who fear can be traced to these divisions. Let us ask God for good success through His magnanimity.

4

The merit of fear

*K*now that the merit of fear is sometimes known by consideration and reflection and sometimes by verses and traditions. With regard to reflection, its procedure is that the merit of anything is in proportion to its adequacy to conduct to the bliss of an encounter with God in the next world, since there is no goal except bliss, and there is no bliss for the creature except in meeting his master and being near to him. Everything which assists him possesses merit, and its merit is in proportion to its goal. For it has been made plain that there is no passage to the bliss of encountering God in the next world except through attaining His love and through intimacy with Him in this world.

Love is not obtained except by knowledge; knowledge is not obtained except by constant reflection; and intimacy is not obtained except by love and constant recollection. Perseverance in recollection and reflection are facilitated only when the seed of this present world is cut off from the heart, and it will not be cut off except by the forsaking of the pleasures and the lusts of this world. The forsaking of things desired is not possible except by the strangling of lusts, and a lust is not strangled by anything as it is by the fire of fear. So fear is the fire which burns up lusts, for its merit is in proportion to the extent to which it burns up lusts, restrains from actions

of disobedience and incites to actions of obedience. That is differentiated according to the different degrees of fear. And how can such fear be other than meritorious, since by it chastity, abstinence, piety and spiritual combat are obtained, and these are actions both meritorious and commendable, promoting nearness to God.

As for the procedure of quoting verses and traditions, what concerns the merit of fear is beyond the range of definition. It will suffice you as an indication to its merit that God has united in those who fear, guidance, mercy, knowledge ('ilm)¹ and satisfaction (*ridā*), all of which are the synthesis of the stations of the people of the Gardens. God says, "Guidance and mercy for such as who fear their Lord" (Qur'an, 7:154) and "Only the knowledgeable among God's creatures fear Him" (Qur'an, 35:25). He attributed to them knowledge in respect of their fear and said, "God well pleased with them and they with Him; all this for such as fear their Lord and Cherisher" (Qur'an, 98:8).

Everything which points to the merit of knowledge points to the merit of fear, as fear is the fruit of knowledge. For that reason it has come down in a tradition of Mūsā, "As for those who fear, they possess the Highest Companion (God)." So observe how he has singled them out for the fellowship of the Highest Companion because they are knowledgeable and the knowledgeable possess the rank of the fellowship of the prophets, as they are the heirs of the prophets, and the fellowship of the Highest Companion belongs to the prophets and whoever overtakes them. For this reason, when the Messenger of God (s) was given the option during his mortal sickness of remaining in the world or going to God, he said, "I ask of You the Highest Companion."

1. "'Ilm" here, where, in the context, "ma'rifah" might have been expected.

Therefore, if one looks at what produces fear, it is knowledge, and if one looks at its product, it is abstinence and piety. There is no secret about what constitutes their respective merits, so that the end is stamped with piety as its special attribute, just as praise is the exclusive attribute of God, and blessings are the exclusive attribute of the Messenger of God (s). To that effect it is said, "Praise to God, Lord of the Worlds. The end is for the pious. And blessings on our master Muhammad (s) and all his family."

Furthermore, God has connected piety particularly with Himself, saying, "It is not their flesh nor blood that reaches God, but your piety that reaches Him" (Qur'an, 22:37). "Piety" is simply an expression for the restraint which is regulated by fear, and so He says, "The most preferred of you with God are those who are most God-fearing" (Qur'an, 49:13). Moreover, God enjoined piety on those who are first and those who are last, saying, "We have directed the people of the Book before you and you (O Muslims) to fear God" (Qur'an, 4:131). And He said, "But fear me, if you are believers" (Qur'an, 3:175).

So He commanded fear and made it obligatory and a condition of faith. Therefore, it cannot be envisaged that a believer will be free from fear, and if his fear is weak, the weakness of his fear will be in proportion to the weakness of his knowledge and his faith.

The Messenger of God (s) said concerning the merit of piety, "When God musters the first and the last for the appointment of a Day which is fixed, a voice, which those furthest away will hear equally with those nearest, will say, 'O you people, I have answered your shouts since your creation to this day, so you answer My call today. It is nothing but your deeds which will rebound to you, O you people. Surely, I have made a standard, and you have made a standard, and you

have depreciated My standard and appreciated your standard. I said, ‘The most preferred of you with God are those who are most God-fearing’ (Qur'an, 49:13), and you disdained it, saying, ‘So-and-so, the son of so-and-so and so-and-so, is richer than so-and-so.’ Hence, today I shall depreciate your standard and appreciate my standard. Where are the pious? So He will raise a banner for the people, they will follow their banner to their lodgings and they will enter Paradise irrespective of what is due to them.”

The Prophet (ṣ) said, “The head of wisdom is the fear of God.” Addressing Ibn Mas'ūd, he said, “If you are desirous of meeting me, then multiply fear after me.”

Al-Fudayl said, “If a man fears God, that fear points him to every good.” Al-Shiblī said, “There is no day that I have feared God but that I have seen in respect of Him a category of wisdom and admonition which I had never seen.”

Yahyā ibn Mu'ādh used to say, “No believer performs an evil deed but two good deeds overtake it, namely, the fear of punishment and the hope of pardon, just like a fox between two lions.” It is related in a tradition of Mūsā, “As for the abstemious, none remains except that I make the closest examination of him and scrutinise what is in his hands, for I feel embarrassment on account of the abstemious and have too much respect for them to halt them for the reckoning.”

“Abstinence” and “piety” are words derived from meanings which are conditional on fear. If they are divorced from fear, they do not bear those names. Likewise, what constitutes the merits of recollection is no secret, and God has made it the special attribute of those who fear. Thus, He says, “He that fears will remember” (Qur'an, 87:10) and “He who fears the station of his Lord will have two Gardens” (Qur'an, 55:46).

In a tradition, the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) is reported to have said that God said, “By My might, I shall not unite in my creature two fears and two securities, for if he feels secure in Me in this world, I shall terrify him on the Day of Resurrection; and if he fears Me in this world, I shall make him secure on the Day of Resurrection.”

The Prophet (ṣ) also said, “If a man fears God, everything fears him, and if a man fears other than God, God threatens him with everything.” In another of his sayings, “The most consummate of you in intelligence are those whose fear of God is most rigorous and who are best at perceiving what God has commanded and forbidden.”

Yahyā ibn Mu‘ādh said, “Poor is the son of Adam. If he feared the Fire as he feared poverty, he would enter Paradise.”

Dhū al-Nūn said, “Whoever fears God with his whole heart, his love for God is intense and his most inward part is right with Him.” Dhū al-Nūn said again, “It is fitting that fear should be more dominant than hope, for when hope is dominant, the heart is disordered.”

Abū al-Husayn al-Ḍarīr used to say, “The mark of bliss is fear of being a reprobate, because fear is a rein between God and His creature, and, when his rein is severed, he perishes with those who perish.”

It was said to Yahyā ibn Mu‘ādh, “Who of God’s creatures is most secure for the morrow?” He answered, “Those of them whose fear of today is most intense.”

Sahl said, “You will not experience fear until you eat what is permitted.” It was said to al-Hasan (al-Baṣrī), “O Abū Sa‘īd, how can we set about sitting down with parties who threaten us, so that our hearts almost fly away with terror?” He replied, “By God, if you mix with parties who threaten you until security overtakes you, it is better for you than that you

should fraternise with parties who make you feel safe until fear overtakes you."

Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī said, "If fear departs a heart, the heart is in ruin."

‘Ā’ishah said, "I asked the Messenger of God whether the Qur’anic verse "Those who give that which they give with their hearts full of fear" (Qur’ān, 23:60) refers to the man who steals and commits adultery. He said, 'No, but to the man who fasts, prays (the statutory prayers), gives supererogatory alms and fears that it may not be accepted of him.'"

The extreme dangers which are involved in feeling secure from the stratagems of God and His punishment cannot be defined. So fear is laudable because the disgust of a thing is praise of its opposite, which negates it. The opposite of fear is security, just as the opposite of hope is despair. And just as the disapproval of despair amounts to approving the merit of hope, so the reprehensibleness of fancied security indicates the merit of fear, which is contradictory to it.

Moreover, we shall say that all that is involved in the merit of hope is a pointer to the merit of fear because the two are interdependent. For everyone who hopes for a desired object cannot but fear that he should miss it, because if he did not fear that he should miss it, he would not be hoping in expectation of it, since he would not be desirous of it. So fear and hope are interdependent, and it would be absurd that one should be severed from the other. Certainly, it is possible that one should dominate the other, although the two are united. It is possible for the heart to be occupied with one and to have no regard to the other for the moment because of its being negligent of it. This is so because from the conditional character of hope and fear, their interdependence is with an object of doubt, since whatever is specified is not hoped for or feared. Therefore, the

object of desire whose existence is possible, its non-existence is also indubitably possible. The assumption that it exists refreshes the heart—and that is hope. The assumption that it does not exist pains the heart—and that is fear. The two assumptions indubitably conflict with each other, since the affair which is expected is in doubt.

One of the two aspects of doubt may number more than the other in proportion with the presence of certain means. This is called “supposition” and would be a cause of the dominance of one of the two over the other. When the existence of the object of desire dominates the supposition, hope is strengthened and fear is concealed in relation to it, and vice versa.

In every circumstance, the two of them are interdependent. God says, “And they pray to Us through yearning and awe” (Qur'an, 21:90) and “They pray to their Lord through fear and yearning” (Qur'an, 32:16). And Arabic has defined “fear” in terms of hope. God says, “What is the matter with you? You place not your hope for kindness and long suffering in God” (Qur'an, 71:12). That is, you do not fear. And there are the many passages in the Qur'an where “hope” has the meaning of “fear” because of their interdependence, since the practice of Arabic is to express a thing in terms of what is complementary to it.

What is more, I say that everything which constitutes the merit of weeping through the fear of God is a demonstration of the merit of fear, for weeping is the fruit of fear. God says, “Then let them laugh little and weep much” (Qur'an, 9:82); “They weep and it increases their humility” (Qur'an, 17:110); and “Do you marvel at this discourse, and do you laugh and do you not weep, while you make merry?” (Qur'an, 53:59-61).

The Messenger God (ṣ) said, “There is no believing creature whose eye drops a tear—even if it were like the head of a fly—through fear of God, and then it drops on some part of his cheek, except that God has precluded him from the Fire.” And his saying “When the heart of a believer trembles because of the fear of God, his sins are stripped from him just as a tree is stripped of its leaves. The Fire will not penetrate to anyone who weeps for fear of God until milk returns to the udder.”

‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir asked the Prophet (ṣ), “What is salvation, O Messenger of God?” He received his reply, “Keep a rein on your tongue, keep to your house and weep for your sins.”

A report from ‘Āishah came to us that she asked the Prophet (ṣ), “O Messenger of God, will anyone of your community enter Paradise without reckoning?” He said, “Yes, he who recollects his sins and weeps.” He also said, “There is no drop more beloved to God than a teardrop for fear of God, or a drop of blood which is shed for the sake of God.” He said, “O God, furnish me with moist eyes which cure the heart through the shedding of tears before tears become blood and molar teeth become live coals.” The Prophet (ṣ) also said, “God will give seven people shade on a day when there will be no shade but His shade,” and he mentioned among them the man who remembered God in private and whose eyes overflowed with tears.”

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq said, “Whoever is able to weep, let him weep, and whoever is not able to weep, let him pretend to weep.” When Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir wept, it was customary for him to wipe his face and beard with his tears and to say, “I have heard that the Fire will not consume a place which tears have wiped.”

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Āṣ said, “Weep, and if you cannot weep, pretend to weep, for by Him in whose hand is

my soul, if one of you possessed knowledge, he would cry out until his voice was cut off and would pray until his back was broken."

Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī said, "No eye fills up with its water but that neither dearth nor abasement will overtake the face of its master on the Day of Resurrection. For if his tears flow, God will extinguish with their first drop oceans of fire. Should one man in a community weep, that community would not be punished."

Abū Sulaymān said, "Weeping is on account of fear and hope, and delight on account of yearning." Ka'b al-Āḥbār said, "By Him in whose hand is my soul, because I weep for fear of God until the tears overflow my cheeks, I commend myself more than if I were to give supererogatory alms of a mountain of gold."

'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr said, "Because I shed a tear for fear of God, I am happy with myself more than if I should give supererogatory alms with a thousand dinars."

It is related that Hanzalah² said, "We were with the Messenger of God (ṣ), and he preached us a sermon by which our hearts were made tender, our eyes were made moist and we knew ourselves. Then I returned to my family, my wife drew near to me, we had a mundane conversation and I forgot what had occupied our minds in the presence of the Messenger of God (ṣ), so that we were taken up with this present world. Then I recollected what it was that had occupied our thoughts and said to myself, 'I have played the hypocrite in that the fear and impressionableness that possessed me have passed away.' So I went out and began to shout, 'Hanzalah is a hypocrite!' And Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq met me and said, 'No, Hanzalah

2. Ibn Hishām, III, 20-21 (Guillaume, 377-378).

has not played the hypocrite.' Then I entered the presence of the Messenger of God (ṣ) while I was saying, 'Hanzalah is a hypocrite.' So the Messenger of God (ṣ) said, 'No, Hanzalah has not played the hypocrite.' So I said, 'O Messenger of God, we were with you, and you preached us a sermon by which our hearts were made fearful, our eyes became tearful and we knew ourselves. Then I returned to my family, we engaged in mundane conversation and I forgot what engaged our minds when we were with you.' So he said, 'O Hanzalah, would that you were always in that state, then the angels would take you by the hand on your journeys and where you lie down. But, O Hanzalah, everything has its appointed time.'"

Therefore, everything which constitutes the merit of hope, weeping, piety, abstinence, knowledge and the reprehensibleness of fancied security is a pointer to the merit of fear because all of these are related to it either by way of cause or effect.

5

Dominance of fear or hope

*K*now that the traditions concerning the merit of fear and hope are legion, and often the observer will inspect the two of them and doubt will overwhelm him as to which of the two is the higher good. The person who says, "Is fear or hope the higher good?" asks a spurious question which resembles the question "Is bread or water the higher good?" The answer to it is to say that bread is the higher good for the person who is hungry, and water for the person who is thirsty. If both are present in union, one has regard to which is the more dominant. If it is hunger, bread is the higher good, and if it is thirst, water is the higher good. If they are in balance, bread and water are on par. This is so because everything which is willed in reference to a goal has its merit disclosed in relation to its goal, not to itself. Fear and hope are therapies by means of which hearts are cured and their respective merits are in proportion to the extent of disease. For if what has dominion over the heart is the disease of fancied security from the stratagems of God and being self-deceived thereby, fear is the higher good. If the most dominant factors are hopelessness and a despairing of the mercy of God, hope is the higher good. Similarly, if disobedience has mastery over the creature, fear is the higher good.

It can be said absolutely that fear is the higher good in the same sense that it is said bread is a higher good than oxymel, since the sickness of hunger is treated with bread and that of jaundice with oxymel, and the disease of hunger is more dominant and frequent, so that the need of bread is the more frequent and as such the higher good. In this sense, the dominance of fear is the higher good because disobedience and self-deceit are more dominant over the creature. If one looks at the source of fear and hope, hope is the higher good because it is an outlet from the sea of mercy, and the outlet of fear is from the sea of wrath. Whoever is attentive to those attributes of God which decree kindness and mercy, love will dominate him, and there is no station beyond love. With regard to fear, its prop is a turning towards those attributes which decree severity, and love does not mingle with it as it does with hope.

In sum, it is proper to employ in reference to whatever is willed for other than itself the expression "more salutary" and not the expression "more meritorious." So we say that for most people fear is more salutary than hope because of the dominance of disobedience. As for the pious person who has forsaken sin, outward and inward, concealed and open, what is most salutary is that his hope and fear should be in equilibrium. For that reason it was said that if the fear and hope of the believer were weighed, they would balance each other.

‘Alī said to one of his children, "Fear God with such a fear as will make you see that if you brought Him the good deeds of all the people of the earth, He would not accept them from you. And hope in God with such a hope as to make you see that if you brought Him the evil deeds of all the people of the earth, He would pardon you for them." ‘Umar ibn al-

Khaṭṭāb exclaimed, "If it were proclaimed, 'Let everybody except one man enter the Fire,' I would hope that I were that man. If it were proclaimed, 'Let everyone enter Paradise except one man,' I would fear that I were that man." This is an explanation of the object of fear and hope and their being in equilibrium, notwithstanding dominance and mastery, by means of counterpoise and equalisation.

So with a person like 'Umar, it is fitting that his fear and hope should be on par. As for the disobedient man, when he supposes that he is the person who is excepted from those who are commanded to enter the Fire, it indicates his self-delusion.

If you say, "It is not fitting with a person like 'Umar that his fear and hope should be on par. It is fitting, rather, that his hope should be dominant (as above, in the first part of *The Book of Hope*) and that its strength should be in proportion to the strength of the means to it, as was illustrated by the sowing and the seed. It is known that whoever sows a healthy seed in clean ground, perseveres in cultivating it and fulfils all the conditions of agriculture, the hope of attainment dominates his heart, so that his fear is not on par with his hope. It is proper that the states of the pious should be such.

Know, therefore, that whoever picks up knowledge from verbal expressions and parables will slip into error, even if we cite a parable to him. So what we were dealing with is not true in every respect, since the cause of the dominance of hope was the knowledge which is the result of experience. For he knew by experience the health of the soil, its cleanliness, the health of the seed, the salubriousness of the atmosphere, the paucity of lethal thunderbolts in that area and so on. For the parable of our proposition would be a seed whose species has not been tried, which has been scattered on unfamiliar soil, which the sower has neither prepared nor tested, in a country where he

does not know whether thunderbolts are frequent or not. With such a sower as this, even if he exerts himself to the utmost and fulfils all that is in his power, his hope will not dominate his fear.

The seed in our proposition is faith, and the conditions of its health are minute. The soil is the heart whose hidden and open vices derive from concealed polytheism, hypocrisy and apostasy, and its hidden properties are beneath the surface. The blights are lusts and blandishments of this world and the turning of the heart towards them in the future. Even if he is safe at the moment, that is on account of what he cannot verify and does not know by experience, since it may chance from causes whose succession he cannot comprehend and whose like he has not experienced.

The thunderbolts are the terrors of the pangs of death and the disturbance of belief in its presence, which belong to those things whose like he has not experienced. Then the Reaping and the Result at the moment of departure from Resurrection to Paradise, which he has not experienced. So whoever knows the essentials of these matters, if he were faint-hearted and cowardly in himself, his fear would indubitably dominate his hope, as it will be related concerning the states of those who feared among the Companions and their students (*tābi‘ūn*). If he were stout-hearted, of a steadfast nature and complete in knowledge, his fear would be on par with his hope. As for the suggestion that his hope would be dominant, this should not be entertained.

‘Umar was in the habit of going over the score in the examination of his heart. So he used to ask Hudhayfah whether he knew of any traces of hypocrisy in him, since the Messenger of God had made Hudhayfah a specialist in the science of hypocrites. For who is the person who is able to

purify his heart from the hidden things of hypocrisy and latent polytheism? If he has secured the cleansing of his heart to the exclusion of that, how will he be secure from the stratagems of God in confusing him as to his state and hiding his defects from him? And if he is confident about this, how can he be confident about his being preserved in that condition, until the completion of the goodness of the End?

The Prophet (*s*) said, “Let a man do the works of the people of Paradise for fifty years, so that only a span remains between him and Paradise (and, in a variant, only the time between two milkings of a she-camel). Then the Book will predestinate and he dies with the deeds of the people of the Fire.” The interval between two milkings of a she-camel does not allow the possibility of an action with the members, as it is no more than the duration of a fleeting impulse which penetrates the heart at death and decrees the Evil End (*sū' al-khātimah*). And how can one be secure from that?

So the most ultimate objective of the believer is that his hope and fear should be in equilibrium, and the dominance of hope with most people would be a leaning on self-deceit and a dearth of knowledge. For this reason God unites both of them in the description of the persons whom He has eulogised, saying, “They pray to their Lord through fear and yearning” (Qur'an, 32:16) and “They pray to Us through yearning and awe” (Qur'an, 21:90).

Where is the like of 'Umar?

So what is most salutary for the people who are alive at this time, all of them, is the dominance of fear, with the proviso that it does not bring them to hopelessness and abandonment of action, severing the yearning for pardon, for that would be a cause of shirking work and a summons to obstinate persistence in disobedience. That is despair and not fear, since fear is that

which provides an incentive for action, weakens all the lusts, and snatches the heart away from reliance on this world, and summons it to withdraw from the home of self-deceit. This is commendable fear; it is not a passing impulse of the soul which does not take effect in restraint and incentive. Nor is it hopelessness which decrees despair.

So Yahyā ibn Mu‘ādh said, “Whoever serves God with undiluted fear is drowned in a sea of reflection. Whoever serves Him with undiluted hope goes astray in a desert of self-deceit. Whoever serves Him with fear and hope is established in a highway of recollection.”

Makhūl of Damascus said, “Whoever serves God with fear is a Khārijite,¹ whoever serves Him with hope is a Murjite,² whoever serves Him with love is a freethinker³ and whoever serves Him with fear and hope and love is a monotheist.” Therefore, these three conditions cannot but be united, and the dominance of fear is most salutary, except at the point of death. At death the dominance of hope and optimism are the most salutary because fear has the effect of the whip, which urges to action, and the time of action has passed, and so the person who is at the point of death has no power over action. Then the means of fear do not avail, for they cut the sinews of his heart and assist the hastening of his death.

1. Ḥarūrī Dozy, in *loc.*, who says that the meaning is “strong, generous,” alluding to the Khārijites, who fought under the name of Harūrites.

2. One who defers, that is, who postpones judgement until it is pronounced by God on the Day of Judgement. See D.B. MacDonald’s *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory.*, pp. 122-127.

3. Or, perhaps, Manichaeon. See Nicholson’s *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 375, n. 2, for observations on “zindīq.”

But the breath of hope strengthens his heart and endears to him his Lord, in whom his hope is. It is not expedient that anyone should leave this world except out of love for God in order that he may be desirous of meeting with God. For whoever desires to meet with God, God desires to meet with him, and hope joins him to love. So whoever hopes for this magnanimity is beloved. The goal of all sciences and actions is knowledge of God, so that knowledge produces love, as the trend is towards Him, the advance at death is towards Him the joy of him who advances towards his Beloved is great in proportion to his love. And whoever abandons his Beloved has his tribulations and punishment intensified.

Wherever the heart is dominated at death by love of family, children, wealth, dwelling, estates, friends and companions, all the things which this man desires are in this world and so this world is his Garden, since Paradise is an expression for the territory which unites all that is desired. Hence, his death is an exit from Paradise and the placing of an obstacle between him and what he desires, and there is no concealing the state of the man who has had an obstacle placed between him and what he desires. If he had no object of desire but God and the recollection of Him and knowledge of Him and reflection on Him, this world and its ties would be a distraction to him to the exclusion of the Beloved. So this world is a prison because a prison is an expression for the place which obstructs the imprisoned from being comforted by the things desired, and so his death is an advance towards his Beloved and is salvation from the prison; and there is no concealing the state of the man who has escaped from the prison and is closeted with his Beloved without obstruction or difficulties.

This is the first reward and punishment which everyone who leaves this world on death will meet. This is apart from

what God has prepared for His creatures who are sound in faith—namely, what the eye has not seen, what the ear has not heard and what has not occurred to the heart of man—and what God has prepared for those who love the life of this present world in preference to the next world and those who are satisfied with it and feel secure in it—namely, bonds of chains and manacles, blows of disgrace and chastisement. So let us ask God to bring us to die as Muslims and to join us to those sound in faith. There is no hope of an answer to this petition except by the acquisition of the love of God, and there is no path to it except by the expulsion of other than God from the heart and the severing of ties from all that is other than God—from rank and wealth and country.

What is most fitting is that you should make petition as the Prophet (s) did when he said, “O Lord furnish me with Your love, the love of whoever loves You and the love of whatever brings me near to Your love and makes Your love more beloved to me than cold water.”

The conclusion to be drawn is that the dominance of hope is more salutary at death because it is most conducive to love; and the dominance of fear is more salutary before death because it best kindles the fire which burns up lusts and best chokes the love of this world out of the heart. For that reason, the Messenger of God (s) said, “Let not one of you die without supposing the best of his Lord, for He said, ‘I identify Myself with what My creature supposes of Me, so let him suppose of Me what he wills.’”

When death was present with Sulaymān al-Taymī, he said to his son, “O my son, tell me about the indulgences of God and remind me about hope, so that I may meet God supposing the best of Him.” Similarly, when death was present with al-Thawrī and his pangs were intensified, the scholars gathered around him, lending him hope.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said to his son at death, “Remind me of the traditions which have hope and optimism in them.” The goal of all that was that he should commend God to himself.

Thus, God revealed to Dāwūd, “Commend Me to My creatures.” He asked, “In what way?” He said, “By your reminding them about My benefits and bounties.”

Ultimate bliss, therefore, is that one should die loving God. Love is attained only through knowledge and through the expulsion of the love of this world from the heart, so that the whole world is like a prison which denies access to the Beloved. Hence, one of the sound in faith saw Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī in a vision, and the latter was airborne. So he questioned Abū Sulaymān, who replied, “Now I am escaping.” When he awoke in the morning, he asked after him and was told that Abū Sulaymān had died the day before.

6

Therapy for inducing fear

Know that what we have mentioned and expounded concerning the therapy of patience in “The Book of Patience and Gratitude”¹ will suffice for this purpose. This is because patience is only possible after the attaining of fear and hope, since the first of the stations of religion is certainty (*yaqīn*), which is an expression for strength of faith in God, the Last Day, Paradise and the Fire. This certainty necessarily excites fear of the Fire and hope of Paradise, and hope and fear fortify patience as Paradise has been surrounded by abhorrent things, and no one has patience to endure them except through the strength of hope. The Fire, on the other hand, has been surrounded with lusts, and no one has patience to resist them except through the strength of fear. For this reason, ‘Alī said, “Whoever longs for Paradise is diverted from lusts, and whoever guards against the Fire recoils from things forbidden.”

Then the station of patience, which is derived from fear and hope, gives access to the station of spiritual combat, exclusive devotion to the recollection of God and constant reflection on Him. Constant recollection gives access to intimacy and constant reflection to the perfection of knowledge. Perfection

1. *Iḥyā*, Vol. IV, book 2.

of knowledge and intimacy give access to love and the station of satisfaction and trustfulness, and the remainder of the stations follows. This is the order of ascent of the stages of religion. No station can succeed the root of assurance except fear and hope, which only patience can succeed. Accompanying it is spiritual combat and utter devotion to God outwardly and inwardly, for the person to whom the way has been opened up there can be no station after spiritual combat except guidance and knowledge. Only the station of love and intimacy can succeed knowledge, and necessarily following love is satisfaction with the action of the Beloved and confidence in His care, which is *tawakkul*.

Therefore, what we have mentioned concerning the regimen of patience is sufficient, but we shall single out fear particularly in a summing up. Fear gives access to two diverse ways, one higher than the other. Its parable is that if a small child were in a house, and a lion or snake came into him, he would probably not be afraid and would stretch out his hand towards the snake to take hold of it and play with it. But if his father were with him, since he is knowledgeable, he would be afraid of the snake and would flee from it. If the lad should look at his father while he was trembling and was about to flee because of it, he would be like his father: Fear would conquer him and he would accompany him in flight. So the fear of the father is on account of insight and knowledge of the attributes of the snake, its poison and its particular characteristics; and the might of the lion, its violence and lack of concern. The fear of the son and his faith are entirely attributable to authority, as he thinks well of his father and knows that he is not afraid except on account of what excites fear in itself. He therefore knows that the lion is a threat, but he does not know the cause of it. If you know this parable, note that the fear of God is on

two planes. One is fear of His punishment, and the second is fear of Him.

With respect to fear of Him, it is the fear of the knowledgeable ('ulamā') and the righteous who have feelings, know His attributes exciting awe, fear and caution and are conscious of the secret of His saying "God warns you to beware of Him" (Qur'an, 3:28) and "Fear God with the fear which is His due" (Qur'an, 3:102). With respect to the first, it is the fear of the rank and file of the people and is a product of the root of faith in Paradise and the Fire, which are respectively the rewards of obedience and disobedience. Its weakness is due to negligence and weakness of faith. Negligence can only be erased by recollection, preaching and tenacious reflection on the terrors of the Day of Resurrection and on the classes of punishment in the next world. Negligence is erased also by observing those who fear, by sharing their company and by seeing their states. If sight should fail, hearing will not be sealed off from receiving impressions.

With regard to the second, it is higher, as it is God Himself who inspires fear. I mean that the creature both fears being veiled from Him and hopes for nearness to Him. Dhū al-Nūn said, "The fear of the Fire in comparison with the fear of alienation is like a drop which is shed in a fathomless sea. This is the fear of the knowledgeable in His statement 'Only the knowledgeable among His creatures fear God' (Qur'an, 35:28)."

But the rank and file of the believers also have a portion of this fear, but it rests exclusively on authority. It is also the fear which the lad had of the snake on the authority of his father, which does not rest on insight and is indubitably weak and soon fades away. Thus, the lad may happen to see the snake-charmer approach and take hold of the snake, and may observe

him and be deceived by him and venture to take hold of it in imitation of him, just as he recoiled from taking hold of it in imitation of his father. Tenets which rest on authority are, for the most part, weak, except when they are strengthened by the sight of the means to them, which constantly reinforce them, and by perseverance in what they decree so as to multiply acts of obedience and avoid acts of disobedience unremittingly over a long period.

Therefore, whoever ascends to the apex of knowledge and knows God, fears Him of necessity and has no need of the regimen which induces fear, just as whoever knows the lion and sees himself falling into its claws has no need of the regimen which will induce fear in his heart, for he fears it of necessity, whether he wills it or not. Hence, God revealed to Dāwūd, "Fear Me as you fear the harmful lion." There is no device for inducing fear of the harmful lion except knowledge of the lion and knowledge of falling into its claws. There is no need of any device besides it.

So whoever knows God knows that He does what He wills and does not care, and legislates as He desires and is not afraid. He brought the angels near without prior merit, and He banished the Devil irrespective of the question of previous sin. Moreover, His character is as His saying explains: "These are in Paradise and I do not care, and these are in the Fire and I do not care." If it occurs to your mind that He does not punish except on account of disobedience, or reward except on account of obedience, consider that He has not furnished the obedient man with the means of obedience, so that he is obedient whether he wills it or not, just as He has not furnished the disobedient man with the motives of disobedience, so that he is disobedient whether he wills it or not. Whenever he creates negligence and lust and power to fulfil the lust,

the action follows them of necessity, for if He alienated a person for being disobedient to Him and did not incite him to disobedience, was this due to a prior disobedience? In which case there is an infinite regress; or else it comes to a halt, doubtless, at a first principle which is uncaused from the point of view of the creature. Rather, the disobedience was decreed for him from all eternity.

The Messenger of God (s) explained the meaning of this when he said, "Adam and Mūsā had an argument concerning their Lord, and Adam had the better of the argument. Mūsā said, 'You are Adam, whom God created with His hand and into whom He breathed of His breath. He made the angels do obeisance to you, and He made you a resident of His Garden. Then you caused the people to fall to the earth through your sin.' Adam replied, 'You are Mūsā, whom God chose for His apostolate and His Word, and gave you the Tablets, on which was an exposition of everything. He brought you near as one noble-born. By how many years did you find that God wrote down the Law before I was created?' Mūsā said, 'By forty years.' Adam asked, 'Did you find in it that Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray?' He replied, 'Yes.' Adam asked, 'Do you then blame me because I performed an action which God had inscribed against me before I did it and forty years before He created me?' Thus Adam out-argued Mūsā."

Whoever knows the cause in this matter with a knowledge which stems from the light of guidance belongs to the elite of the gnostics—to those who scrutinise the secret of predestination. Whoever hears this, believes in it and affirms its truth solely on the strength of what he has heard belongs to the rank and file of the believers. Everyone in both of these groups is affected by fear, as every creature is as one falling into the clutch of predestination, just as the weak youth who

falls into the claws of the lion. The lion may chance to be heedless and leave him alone; and it may pounce on him and maul him, which is regulated by what is contingent.

Connected with this contingency are causes which are graduated in proportion with how much is known. But when the contingency is related to one who does not know it, the cause is called "contingency." If it is related to the knowledge of God, it is not permissible that it should be called contingency. As for the person who falls into the claws of the lion, if his knowledge were perfect, he would not be afraid of the lion, since the lion is coerced. If hunger dominates it, it will maul, and if heedlessness dominates it, it will ignore him and leave him alone. So he would be afraid only of the Creator of the lion and His attributes. I am not going to say that fear of the lion is a parable of fear of God. Rather, when the cover is withdrawn, it will be known that fear of the lion is the very fear of God, as the one who kills by means of the lion is God.

Know that the lions of the next world are like the lions of this world, and that God has created the means of punishment and reward, and has created for everyone a complement. The predestination which is a branch of the irrevocable and eternal decree drives him towards what is created for him. So He created Paradise and created for it a complement coerced by the means to it, whether they will it or not. Similarly, He created the Fire and created for it a complement coerced by the means to it, whether they will it or not. No person sees himself in the buffeting of the waves of predestination but that fear necessarily dominates him.

These are the things concerning the secret of predestination which the gnostics fear. If a person is a party to a deficiency which precludes the ascent to the station of insight, his procedure is to treat himself by listening to traditions and

reports, to search out the states and sayings of the gnostics who feared and to compare their intellect and rank with the rank of those who were self-deceived in their hoping. There is no doubt that imitating them is most fitting, for they are the prophets, saints and knowledgeable.

As for those who think themselves secure, they are the arrogant, ignorant and remiss. Our Messenger (s) is the Master of the first and the last, yet he was of all men subject to the most intense fear. It is related that he was praying over an infant and that according to one recension he was heard to say in his petition, "O God, preserve him from the punishment of the grave and the punishment of the Fire." In a second recension, he heard someone saying, "Congratulations to you, one of the sparrows of Paradise," whereupon he became angry and said, "How did you get to know that it is so ordered? By God! I am the Messenger of God and I have not ascertained what He will do with me. God has created Paradise and has created for it a complement which may not be increased or diminished."

It is related that the Prophet (s) said likewise when he heard Umm Salamah say, "May you enjoy Paradise!" over the bier of 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn, who was among the first of the Emigrants. Umm Salamah used to say thereafter, "By God! I do not eulogise anyone after 'Uthmān." Muḥammad ibn Khawlah al-Ḥanafiyyah said, "I do not ascribe merit to anyone except the Messenger of God (s), not even to my father who begot me. But the Shiites were roused against him, and he began to mention the merits and attainments of 'Alī."

A similar incident is related in another account concerning a man belonging to the people of the bench (*ashlāb al-ṣuffah*) who died a martyr's death. His mother said, "Congratulations to you, one of the sparrows of Paradise. You emigrated to

the Messenger of God and were killed for the sake of God." The Prophet (ṣ) said, "How did you get to know? Perhaps he conversed in what will not benefit him and proscribed what will not injure him."

It is related that the Prophet (ṣ) came into the presence of one of his Companions who was ill, and heard a woman saying, "You have the joy of Paradise!" He said, "Who is this swearing by God?" So the sick man said, "She is my mother, O Messenger of God." So he said, "How did you get to know? Perhaps so-and-so conversed in what will not benefit him and was thrifty in what will not enrich him."

How will every believer not be afraid when the Prophet (ṣ) said that Sūrah Hūd, Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah, Sūrah al-Takwīr and Sūrah al-Naba' make him grey-haired. The scholars said, "Perhaps that refers to what Sūrah Hūd says in reference to banishment: "Lo! 'Ad disbelieved in their Lord, away with 'Ad, the people of Hūd" (Qur'an, 11:60); "Lo! Away with Thamūd" (Qur'an, 11:68); and "Lo! Away with Midian as Thamūd had been removed afar" (Qur'an, 11:95).

Although the Prophet (ṣ) knew that if God had willed it, they would not have been polytheists, for if He willed, He would bring every soul its guidance. Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah reads, "None denies its taking place, abasing (some), exalting (some)" (Qur'an, 56:2-3). That is, the pen is dry with things, as they are fixed, and what is foreordained has come to completion, so that the event comes down, whether it be the abasing of a people who were exalted in this world, or the exalting of a people who were abased in this world.

In Sūrah al-Takwīr (Qur'an, 81) are the terrors of the Day of Resurrection and the disclosing of the End. For example, He says, "When Hell will be set blazing, when Paradise will be brought near, a soul will know what it has presented" (Qur'an,

81:12-14). Elsewhere, He says, “About what are they asking each other?” (Qur'an, 78:1); “On a day when a man will see what his hands have sent forward...” (Qur'an, 78:40); and “They will not speak except for him to whom the Merciful may give permission and who speaks aright” (Qur'an, 78:38).

The Qur'an from beginning to end is a source of fear for whoever reads it thoughtfully. Even if there were nothing in it except His saying “But I am forgiving to whoever repents and believes and does what is sound and at last is guided” (Qur'an, 20:82), it would be sufficient because He has made pardon dependent on four conditions, any one of which the creature is unable to fulfil.

More rigorous than this are His words “But as for him who repents and believes and does what is sound, perchance he may be among those who prosper” (Qur'an, 28:67); “That He might question the truthful as to their truthfulness” (Qur'an, 33:8); “Soon shall We settle your affairs, O both you worlds!” (Qur'an, 55:31);² “Do they feel secure then against the plan of God—but no one can feel secure from the Plan of God, except those (doomed) to ruin!” (Qur'an, 7:99); “Such is the grip of your Lord, when He takes hold of a town in its wrong-doing; surely His grip is painful, terrible” (Qur'an, 11:102); “On the Day when We shall gather those who show piety to the Merciful like a band presented before a king for honours; and drive the guilty to Hell, a weary herd” (Qur'an, 19:85-86); “There is not one of you but will go down to it—that is with

2. Qur'an, 55:31. Muhammad Asad has translated “*thaqalān*” as “O you sin laden two!” with the following explanation: “According to an interpretation quoted by Rāzī, the designation *thaqalān* (the dual form of *thaqal*, ‘a thing of weight’) signifies that both these categories of human beings are liable to, and therefore burdened with, sinning.”

your Lord a decree which must be accomplished" (Qur'an, 19:71); "Do what you will—He is Seer of what you do" (Qur'an, 41:40); "If anyone wishes the tillage of the Hereafter, we shall give him increase in his tillage—and whoso desires harvest of the world, We give him thereof, and he has no portion in the Hereafter" (Qur'an, 42:20); "Whoever does an atom's weight of good, will see it—and whoever does an atom's weight of ill, will see it" (Qur'an, 99:7-8); "But We shall turn to whatever deeds they did (in this life), and We shall make such deeds as floating dust scattered about" (Qur'an, 25:23); and "By the afternoon! Surely man is in a state of loss; save those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another patience" (Qur'an, 103:1-3).

So these are the four conditions of salvation from loss.

The fear the prophets felt, despite the overflow of blessings on them, was because they did not think themselves secure from the stratagems of God; only the people of perdition think themselves secure from the stratagems of God.³ It is related that the Prophet and Jibril were weeping for fear of God when God revealed to both of them, "Why do you weep, since I have made both of you secure?" They said, "Who is secure from Your stratagems?" It was as if both of them, knowing that God Himself is the knower of hidden things and does not acquaint them with the ultimate goal of affairs, did not think themselves secure. His saying "I have made both of you secure" they thought is a trial and test for them, so that if their fear had been quietened, it would have been clear that they thought themselves secure from the stratagems and had not fulfilled their saying.

So was with Ibrāhīm, who, when he was put in the catapult (*al-manjanīq*), said, "Sufficient for me is God (*hasbī Allāh*)."

3. Cf. Qur'an, 7:97.

This was one of the great petitions. So he was tested and was joined in the air by Jibril, who asked, "Are you in need?" He said, "Not of you," which was a fulfilment of the essence of His saying "Sufficient for me is God." So God related of him, saying, "Ibrāhīm who fulfilled."⁴ That is, what was entailed by his saying "Sufficient for me is God."

As a parable of this, it is reported concerning Mūsā that when he and Hārūn said, "Our Lord! Truly we fear lest he act hastily with regard to us, or lest he transgress all bounds." Answered He, "Fear not. Verily I shall be with you two, hearing and seeing" (Qur'an, 20:45-46). In spite of this, when the magicians cast their spells,⁵ Mūsā quaked with fear within himself because he did not feel secure from the stratagems of God and was confused over the affair until security was renewed to him. It was said to him, "Fear not, surely you are the uppermost" (Qur'an, 20:68).

When the power of the Muslims was weak on the day of Badr, the Messenger (ṣ) said, "O God, if you kill this band, no one will remain on the face of the earth to worship You." So Abū Bakr said, "Leave off badgering your Lord. Surely He will fulfil for you His promise." For Abū Bakr was at the station of the sincere (*ṣiddiq*), the station of reliance on the promise of God. The station of the Messenger of God was that of fearing the plan of God, and is the more complete, as it can derive only from the perfection of knowledge concerning the secrets of God, the concealed aspects of His actions and the meanings of His attributes, which He expresses by actions that derive from them by way of plotting.

It is given to no human being to get to the bottom of the attributes of God. If a man knows the essence of knowledge

4. Qur'an, 53:37. "Who paid his debt in full" (Arberry).

5. Cf. Qur'an, 20:60 f.

and that his knowledge comes short of getting to the bottom of affairs, his fear will indubitably be great. For that reason, when it was said to ‘Isā (by God), “Did you say to the people, ‘Take me and my mother as gods apart from God?’ ‘Isā answered, “Glory to You, what reason have I for saying what does not belong to me by right? If I did say it, You know it. You know what is in me, but I do not know what is in You.”⁶ And he also said, “If You punish them, they are Your creatures; if You pardon them, You are the Exalted in power, the Wise” (Qur'an, 5:118). ‘Isā transferred the affair to will and disassociated himself entirely from speaking as to his knowledge of it. This is because he had nothing to do with the affair and because affairs are tied to will with a connection which issues beyond the boundary of things intelligible and familiar, so that it is not possible to give a ruling on them by use of analogy, conjecture, opinion or, a fortiori, verification and proof, and this is what the hearts of the gnostics have grasped.

For the greatest catastrophe is the tie-up of your affair with the will of one who has no concern for you. If He destroys you, He has destroyed the like of you, an innumerable company, and He is continually punishing them in this world with different kinds of torments and diseases. In addition, He makes their hearts diseased with unbelief and hypocrisy, then perpetuates their punishment to all eternity. So it is reported concerning Him that He says, “If We had so willed, We could have given every soul its guidance, but now is My saying realised: Surely I shall fill Hell with jinn and men together”⁷ and “And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled: Surely I shall fill Hell with jinn and men altogether” (Qur'an, 11:119).

6. Cf. Qur'an, 5:116.

7. Cf. Qur'an, 32:13; 7:18; 11:119; 38:85.

How can one fail to be afraid at that part of the saying which has been realised from all eternity, so that one may not yearn to attain to it? If the affair were undetermined, yearning would be of use in respect of it. But there is no alternative except to be resigned to it and to discriminate between the hidden things of predestination and the clear causes which are visible to the heart and members. Whoever has easy access to the means of evil has an obstacle between him and the means of good, and his relationships are regulated from the side of this world. So it is as if a disclosure were made to him by way of verifying the secret of predestination, which predestined him as a reprobate. This is because whenever easy access to virtue is created for him, even if all the virtues are easily accessible and the heart is entirely cut off from this world and outwardly and inwardly set on God, this decrees the lightening of fear if the permanency of these circumstances is confidently assumed by him. But the peril of the End and the difficulty of safety fans into a blaze, the fires of fear, which are impossible to extinguish.

How can the vicissitudes of circumstances offer security while the heart of the believer is between two of the fingers of the Merciful, and the heart is violently overturned by the ferments of fate? The Reverser of Hearts says, "Surely from their Lord's punishment none feels secure" (Qur'an, 70:28). The most ignorant member of the populace is he who thinks himself secure, while He is warning against fancied security.

Were it not that God is gracious with His creatures, the gnostics, their hearts would be consumed with the fire of fear when He refreshed their hearts with the breath of hope. So the means of hope is a mercy to the elite of God, and the means of negligence is, from one point of view, a mercy to the rank and file of the creatures. If the cover were withdrawn, souls

would perish and hearts would be cut off because of fear of the Reverser of Hearts.

One of the gnostics said, "If a pillar were interposed between me and one whom I knew to be a monotheist for fifty years and then died, I would not conclude that he was a monotheist because I would not be cognisant with what had been made clear to him in respect of reversal." One of them said, "If the choice were between martyrdom at the door of the house and death in Islam at the door of the room, I would choose death in Islam because I do not know what may chance on my heart between the door of the room and the door of the house."

Abū al-Dardā' used to swear by God that there is no one who thought himself safe from God's taking away his faith (*imān*) at death, then it will be taken away." Sahl used to say, "The sincere's (*ṣiddiq*) fear of the Evil End (*sū' al-khātimah*) is present at every step and motion, and they are those whom God describes when He says, 'And their hearts are quaking' (Qur'an, 23:60)." When Sufyān was at the point of death, he began to weep and be grief-stricken, and so it was said to him, "O Abū 'Abdullāh, keep hoping, for the pardon of God is greater than your sins." He said, "Is it then because of my sins that I weep? If I knew that I would die a monotheist, I would not be concerned about meeting God with sins the like of mountains."

It is related that one of those fearful told one of his brethren, "When death comes to me, sit by my head. If you see me dying as a monotheist, take hold of all that I possess and buy with it almonds and sugar and distribute them to the youths who inhabit the district, saying, 'This is the wedding breakfast of one who has made good his escape.' And if I die in a state other than that of a monotheist, tell the people that I died a

non-monotheist, so that they be not deceived by the sight of my bier. Whoever has the most desire after knowing what kind of person I was may accompany my bier, so that hypocrisy should not be attached to me after death." The brother asked, "But by what token shall I know this?" So he mentioned a mark to him. And he saw the mark of *tawhīd* at his death, and so he bought sugar and almonds and distributed them.

Sahl used to say, "The novice fears lest he may be tried by disobedience, and the gnostic ('ārif) fears lest he may be tried by unbelief."

Abū Yazid used to say, "Whenever I repair to the mosque, it is as if a girdle⁸ were around my middle pulling me to the Church and the House of Fire, until I enter the mosque and the girdle is severed from me. This happens to me five times every day."

It is related that 'Isā said, "O company of disciples, you fear sins, and we of the company of the prophets are afraid of unbelief."

It is related in the traditions of the prophets that a prophet complained to God of hunger, lice and nakedness over a period of years, and his clothes were of wool. Then God revealed to him, "O my creature, are you not content that I have protected your heart from unbelief in Me? Now you ask Me for this world?" So he took dust, laid it on his head and said, "Yes, I am content, O Lord, protect me from unbelief."

Since the fear of the gnostics, in spite of their deep rooted faith, was on account of the Evil End, how can the weak not be frightened of it?

The Evil End has causes which come to the forefront as death approaches, such as modernism, hypocrisy and pride, and a host of reprehensible characteristics. Hence, the fear which

8. i.e., the belt of a Christian monk.

the Companions had of hypocrisy was intense, so that al-Hasan (al-Baṣrī) said, "If I knew that I was innocent of hypocrisy, it would be more desirable to me than the place on which the sun rises." What is meant here is not the hypocrisy which is the contradiction of the basis of faith. Rather, what is intended by it is the hypocrisy combined with faith, so that a Muslim is at the same time a hypocrite. It possesses many marks.

The Messenger of God (ṣ) said, "There are four characteristics which make a man a pure hypocrite, even if he prays and fasts and claims that he is a Muslim. If there is one of these four characteristics in him, there is in him a branch of hypocrisy until he gets rid of it. The signs are that when he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks; when he is relied on, he fails; and when he litigates, he commits perjury." And in another recension, "When he promises, he betrays."

The Companions and their students (*tābi’ūn*) have offered such an exegesis of hypocrisy that only the person who is sincere is free from every detail of it. Al-Hasan (al-Baṣrī) said, "Hypocrisy is differentiated into secrecy and openness, tongue and heart and what goes into the heart and what comes out."

Who is free from these attributes, as these have become deeply rooted habits with men through commonplace practice, and they have forgotten that they are entirely abhorrent? If it was a common practice during the Prophet's time, then we can imagine its enormity during our time. In this regard, Hudhayfah said, "If a man uttered a word by which he was taken as a hypocrite during the Prophet's time, I hear it from you now ten times a day."

The Companions of the Messenger of God used to say, "You do things which in your eyes are finer than a strand of hair, yet they were considered great sins during the Prophet's time." One of the Companions said, "A mark of hypocrisy is

that you dislike in other people what you yourself practice, that you hanker after anything that is wrong and that you loathe anything that is right." And it was said concerning hypocrisy, "When a man is praised for anything he does not have, that makes him pleased."

A man said to Ibn 'Umar, "Truly we go to these amirs and swear that they are truthful in what they were saying, and when we come out, we speak against them among ourselves." Ibn 'Umar said, "We counted this as hypocrisy during the time of the Messenger of God (s)." It is related that Ibn 'Umar heard a man blaming al-Hajjāj, approached him and said, "Is it the case that if al-Hajjāj were present, you would speak as you have spoken about him?" He said, "No." He said, "We counted this as hypocrisy⁹ at the time of the Messenger of God (s)." More extreme than this is what is related concerning how a certain party of men squatted at the gate of Hudhayfah, awaiting him and conversing about some item of his business. When he came out to them, they were silent out of respect for him. So he said, "Carry on with your conversation." But they kept silent. He said, "We counted this as hypocrisy during the time of the Prophet (s)"

This is Hudhayfah who had been specially entrusted with the knowledge of hypocrites and the causes of hypocrisy. He used to say, "Surely there comes on the heart an hour when it is filled with faith, so that there is not a needle's head of room for hypocrisy in it; and there comes on it an hour when it is filled with hypocrisy, so that there is not a needle's head of room for faith in it." You come to know by this that the fear of the gnostics is on account of the Evil End, and that its causes are the affairs which precede it, such as modernism, disobedience and hypocrisy.

9. ﻋَلَى is missing from the text of the 1939 ed.

When is a person free from all these? If he supposes that he is free from hypocrisy, he is a hypocrite, for it is said, "Whoever feels secure from hypocrisy is a hypocrite." And one gnostic said to another, "I truly fear for myself with respect to hypocrisy." He said, "If you were a hypocrite, you would not be afraid of hypocrisy."

So the attention of the gnostic constantly alternates between predestination and the End (*khātimah*) for fear of both of them. The Prophet (s) said, "The believer is between two threats: the term which has run its course, in respect of which he does not know what God is doing about it, and the term which is still in being, in respect of which he does not know what God will decree for him. By the one in whose hand is my soul, there is no one to crave boons from after death, and after this world, there is no dwelling place but Paradise or the Fire." From God alone we seek help.

7

The meaning of *sū' al-khātimah* (the Evil End)

If you ask, "Surely the fear of many of the people goes back to the *sū' al-khātimah* (the Evil End), so what is the meaning of '*sū' al-khātimah*'?" Know that the *sū' al-khātimah* has two degrees, one greater than the other. As for the major degree, which is to be dreaded most, it consists in the fact that at the throes of death and the appearance of its terrors, the heart is dominated either by doubt or apostasy, and the spirit is snatched away when apostasy or doubt is the dominant state. So what has gained ascendancy over the heart on account of the apostasy is a veil between him and God for ever. That decrees alienation in perpetuity and everlasting punishment.

The second and lesser degree is constituted by a man's heart being dominated at death by the love of some worldly affairs and lust, so that in that state, there is room for nothing else. Then the snatching away of his spirit happens unexpectedly while he is in that state. For the swamping of his heart by it is the bending of his head towards this world and the inclining of his face to it. Whenever the face is averted from God, the veil is drawn between him and God, and whenever the veil is drawn, punishment is decreed, since the blazing fire of God will only take hold of those who are veiled from Him. As for the believer whose heart is secured from the

love of the world and whose attention is directed towards God, the fire will say to him, "Pass, O believer, for your light has extinguished my flame."

Whenever the snatching away of the spirit happens in a state when the love of the world is dominant, the affair is full of danger, for a man dies as he lives. It is not possible for the heart to acquire another characteristic after death, which would contradict the characteristic dominating it at the time of death, since you cannot effect changes on the heart except by the actions of members, and the members have been made inactive by death, and so actions have also ceased. So there is no hope of action and no hope of return to this world in order to make amends.

In these circumstances the loss would be great were it not that the root of faith and the love of God, when they have been imprinted in the heart over a long period and have been reinforced by sound actions, erase from the heart this state which befell it at death. So if the strength of a man's faith were equal to an atom's weight (*mīthqāl*), it would bring him out of the Fire in a short time; if it were less than this, his sojourn in the Fire would be lengthy; and if it were no more than the weight of a seed, it would inevitably bring him out of the Fire, even if it were after thousands of years.

If you say, "What you have mentioned decrees that the Fire should hasten to him after his death. What then is His purpose in delaying until the Day of Resurrection and procrastinating for the duration of this period?" Know that whoever denies the punishment of the grave is an innovator (*mubtadi'*) who is veiled from the light of God, the light of the Qur'an and the light of faith. Moreover, what is sound in the opinion of men of insight is what the traditions correctly state, namely, that the grave is either one of the pits of the Fire or the meadows of

Paradise, and there may open to the grave of one who is to be chastised seventy gates of Hell. It is related that seventy doors from Hell may be opened to the tortured. It is also related that no sooner does the soul leaves his body than affliction befalls him if he has been afflicted with the Evil End.

The kinds of punishment vary with the times. The interrogation of Munkar and Nakir takes place at the moment of being deposited in the grave and followed by chastisement. After that are the exhaustive scrutiny in making up the account, and shame before the witnesses on the Day of Resurrection. That is followed by the peril of the Bridge and the dread of the Warders of Hell.¹

The reprobate will be incessantly revolving in all his states between the different classes of punishment, unless God covers him with His mercy. You should not suppose that the dust will consume the locus of faith. Rather, the dust will consume all the body parts and will scatter them until the prescribed term is fulfilled. Then the dismembered pieces will be collected and the spirit, which is the locus of faith, will be brought back to them. From the time of death until its return, it has been either in the crops of green birds, which are suspended beneath the Throne if it were blessed, or in an opposite state if it were reprobate (may God save us).

If you ask, "What then is the cause which leads to the Evil End?" know that enumerating the causes of these matters in detail is not possible, but it is possible to indicate what they are in total. With respect to the *khātimah* which is on account

1. A tradition regarding them runs as follows: "On the Day of Resurrection, the Warders of Hell will make more speed towards libertines who are bearers of the Qur'an than they will towards idol and fire worshippers." The fire worshippers are the Magians or Zoroastrians.

of doubt and apostasy, its cause is confined to two things. One of them can be envisaged along with complete abstinence and asceticism and perfect soundness of action, as, for example, the innovator who is an ascetic. His latter End is perilous in the extreme, even if his actions should be sound. I do not mean practice, and so I say innovation (for an exposition of that² would require a lengthy statement). Rather, I mean the modernism which a man believes in respect of the essence of God and His attributes and actions, contrary to reality. So he believes Him to be the contrary of what He actually is, either through his opinion and intellect and observation, by means of which he conducts disputation, on which he relies and by which he is self-deceived, or through his imitating (*taqlid*) somebody in the same situation.

When death draws near and the Angel of Death is visible to him and his heart is confused, often the groundlessness of what he had believed through ignorance may be disclosed to him in the condition of the throes of death, since the state of death is that of the withdrawing of the cover and his agony has its origin in it. So a certain matter may thereby be disclosed to him, and, whenever he sees what he had believed to be groundless, of whose certainty he had been convinced within himself, he will not suppose within himself that he has erred in this belief in particular, because of his having recourse in it to his pernicious opinion and deficient intellect. Instead, he will suppose that all he has believed is without root, since he does not draw any distinction between his faith in God and His Messenger and the rest of his sound beliefs and his false beliefs. Hence, the disclosure that certain of his beliefs derived from ignorance is a cause of making the rest of his beliefs invalid or of arousing his doubt in sound beliefs as well.

2. i.e., an exposition of what is meant by "*madhab*," which I have translated as "practice."

So if the departure of his spirit happens to take place at that instant before he regains his steadfastness and returns to the root of faith, he is sealed with Evil (*sū' al-khātimah*), and his spirit has gone out in a state of polytheistic belief—we seek refuge with God from that. It is these things that are intended in His saying “But there would appear to them from God what they had not been reckoning on” (Qur'an, 39:47) and “Say, ‘Shall We announce to you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose effort goes astray in this present life, though they think they are doing well’” (Qur'an, 18:103-4).

Just as there may be disclosed in sleep what will be in the future, and that is because of the lightening of the cares of the world from the heart, certain matters are disclosed in the throes of death. Since the distractions of the world and the lusts of the body are the things which obstruct the heart from observing the Kingdom³ and scrutinising what is in the Preserved Tablet,⁴ so that things as they are might be disclosed to it. So the like of this state is a cause of disclosure, and disclosure is a cause of doubt concerning the remainder of the beliefs. Anyone who believes anything in respect of God and His attributes and acts to contrary of what he believes, whether on authority or by observing opinion and intellect, is in this danger; and asceticism and soundness of action will not suffice to repel this danger. Rather, only belief in what is real will afford safety from it.

3. Margaret Smith, *al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, p. 106 f.

4. Qur'an, 85:22. In the Qur'anic context, the reference is to the preexistent Qur'an. In Sufism, the Preserved Tablet was part of the impedimenta of theosophic speculation. That there was the germ of this development in traditional material can be seen from the reference to the Tablets to which Mūsā had access and which contained an exposition of everything.

The simple folk are far from this danger. I mean those who believe in God, His Messenger and the Last Day with comprehensive and firmly-rooted faith, such as the bedouin the masses and those common folk who have neither waded into research and enquiry, wallowed in scholastic theology as if it were an absolute standard of reference nor inclined to the different kinds of systematic theologians, accepting on authority their divergent sayings instead.

The Prophet (ṣ) said, "The majority of the people of Paradise are simple folk." For that reason, the early Muslim community (*salaf*) proscribed research, enquiry, wading into scholastic theology and examining these matters. They, rather, commanded the people to restrict themselves to believing in what God has revealed in its totality and to what has come from meanings that are plain. They also forbade them to wade into allegorical exegesis because the danger involved in research into the attributes of God is great, its ascents are steep, its paths are rugged and the intellect comes short of attaining to the majesty of God. The guidance of God with the light of assurance is veiled from human hearts because they bear the inborn impress of the love of the world.

What the researchers have mentioned by displaying the wares of their intellects is a source of confusion and contradiction, for hearts are familiar with what has been inculcated into them at the beginning of their development and are attached to it. The feud-promoting factions which occasion bloodshed among the people are nails which reinforce beliefs inherited and appropriated with good hopes from teachers at the beginning of the affair. Then there are men of such a stamp that they are infatuated with the love of the world and turn to it, appropriating the lusts of the world and their strangleholds and swerving from completeness of reflection.

Thus, when the door of systematic theology is opened up in respect of God and His attributes by means of opinion and intellect, in spite of incompatibilities of temperament in people and differences in their make-up, the eagerness of every ignorant person among them to claim perfection or that he has encompassed the furthest reach of reality, their tongues go off with whatever occurs to each of them. And that is attached to the hearts of those who incline to them and is consolidated through long familiarity with them, and the way of salvation is entirely blocked against them.

This is because the safety of the populace consists in their occupying themselves with sound actions and not becoming entangled with what is outside the limit of their capacity. But at the moment the rein is loose, rubbish is being disseminated, and every ignoramus descends on the side of what suits his nature, armed with supposition and conjecture, believing it to be science and proof and unadulterated faith and supposing that whatever he alights on by the use of hypothesis and appraisal is established science (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) and certainty itself (*'ayn al-yaqīn*)—“And you shall surely know the truth of it after a time” (Qur'an, 38:88). It is fitting that it should be declaimed concerning these people when the cover is withdrawn:

You were optimistic about the days when it was well with you,
And you did not fear the evil which fate brings,
And the nights made you feel safe, and you were deceived
by them,
For with clear nights comes the onset of murkiness.

Know for sure that everyone who forsakes the pure faith in God, His Messenger and His Book and wades into research has become entangled in this danger. His parable is that of

one whose ship is broken up while he is in the buffettings of the waves, being tossed from wave to wave. It may happen that he will be cast onto the shore, but that is a remote possibility; the probability is that he will perish. Everyone who follows a faith which he has acquired from researchers through the display of the wares of their intellects—whether along with the proofs which they have composed in their partisan squabbles or without the proofs—if he doubts it, he is corrupt in his religion, and, if he trusts in it, he is thinking himself secure from the stratagems of God, being self-deceived by his deficient intellect.

No person who wades into research can be disjoined from these two conditions, except when he has gone beyond the limits of the intellect to the light of disclosure (*nūr mukāshafah*), which is the sunrise in the domain of sainthood and prophethood, and is red sulphur in whatever way⁵ it may be facilitated. Only the simple folk among the commonalty are safe from this peril or those whose preoccupation is the fear of the Fire along with obedience to God, and so they have not waded into these superfluities, as this is one of the means which promote the peril of the Evil End.

As for the second cause, it is weakness of faith in the root, followed by the grip of the love of the world over the heart. Whenever there is weakness of faith, the love of God is weak and the love of the world is powerful. So it comes to pass that in the proportion, there remains in the heart no place for the love of God. Except in respect of a fleeting impulse, no trace of it is visible in the counteracting of appetite or in the avoidance of the way of Satan. That produces an obstinate persistence in the following of lusts, so that the heart is darkened and

5. وَإِنْجِي Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, p. 6.

hardened. Darkness of appetites is heaped up on the heart and constantly extinguishes what it contains of the light of faith because of its faintness, so that the heart becomes rusty and corroded.

When the throes of death come, the weakness of that love is intensified in impotence—I mean the love of God—in relation to the terror of separation from this world, since it is the object of desire which dominates the heart. So the heart is afflicted with the terror of being separated from the world, and sees that it is *taqdir* (fate), and so its most inward occupation is the dislike of the fate of death over it—and loathing of it in so much as it is from God. So he is afraid that it may arouse in his inner self a loathing of God in the place of love. This is like the person who loves his son with a weak love. When his son has seized his possessions which are dearer to him than his son and has consumed them, this weak love is turned into loathing. If the departure of his spirit should come to pass at that instant in which he is affected by this impulse, then he has been sealed with evil (*sū' al-khātimah*) and has perished with an everlasting death. The cause which leads to an end like this is the dominance of the love of the world, reliance on it and joy in the means to it, together with weakness of faith, which determines the weakness of the love of God.

Hence, whoever finds the love of God in his heart more dominant than the love of the world (even if he should be in love with the world also) is more remote from this danger. The love of the world is the root of every sin and is the incurable disease, including in its scope different classes of people. All of that is due to a paucity of the knowledge of God, since only he who knows Him can love Him. In reference to this, He says, "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, properties which you have acquired, trade which you fear may

grow slack and dwellings in which you find satisfaction are dearer to you than God, His Messenger and jihad in His path, then wait until God brings His command" (Qur'an, 9:24).

Therefore, everyone whose spirit is severed from him in a state when the impulse of distaste towards God was in his mind and the hatred of the action of God was visible in his heart in respect of its effecting a separation between him, his family, his wealth and the remainder of his objects of desire, his death will be an advance towards what he loathes and a separation from what he loves, and so he will advance on God as would a runaway slave who is odious, when he is brought forward to his master by force. There is no concealing what he deserves of chastisement and punishment.

As for him who dies in a state of loving God, he will return to God as would the well-doing servant who longs after his master and endured the difficulties of actions and the toils of journeying out of a yearning to meet him. There is no concealing the joys and delights which he will encounter simply from his reunion, apart from what he will merit in the way of kindnesses of preferment and new benefits.

As for the second type of Evil End, which is not so severe as the first and does not result in a decree of eternal punishment in the Fire, it also has two causes. One of them is the multitude of acts of disobedience, even if faith should be strong. The other is weakness of faith, even if acts of disobedience should be few. This is because the cause of committing acts of disobedience is the dominance of lusts and their being rooted in the heart through much usage and custom. The recollection of everything with which a man has familiarised himself during his life returns to his heart at death. If his inclination, for the most part, was to acts of obedience, what is present with him will, for the most part, be the recollection of obedience

to God. If his inclination, for the most part, was to acts of disobedience, the recollection of these will dominate his heart at death. His spirit may be snatched away when some worldly lust or act of disobedience is dominant, and his heart will be shackled by it and as such veiled from God. So the person who commits sin only occasionally is more remote from this peril, and the person who does not commit sin at all is very remote from this peril. In the case of him whom acts of disobedience dominate and are more numerous than his acts of obedience and whose heart is more rejoiced with them than it is with his acts of obedience, this peril is very great.

We can know this by means of a parable. It consists in the fact that it is no secret to you that a man sees in his sleep the sum of the states with which he has made himself familiar during the length of his life, so that he sees only images of the objects which he has seen in waking life. Thus, the adolescent who has a dream will not see the picture of sexual intercourse, since he has never had intercourse in his waking life. And if he were to remain permanently in this condition, he would not see in his dream the picture of sexual intercourse.

Then it is transparent that he who has spent his life in jurisprudence will see more of the states that are related to the science and its practitioners than the merchant who has spent his life in trade. And the merchant will see more of the states which are related to trade and its means than the physician and the jurist, as what is manifest in the state of sleep is simply that to which there has obtained a relationship with the heart through length of familiarity or some other cause. Death resembles sleep, but is beyond it. Nevertheless, the throes of death and the swooning which precede it are akin to sleep, and that decrees the recollecting of what is familiar and its return to the heart.

One cause which is preponderant in effecting its recollection in the heart is length of familiarity, and so length of familiarity with acts of disobedience or obedience is also a dominant factor. In the same way, the dreams of those who are sound in faith and those of sinners are different, and so the dominance of what is familiar is the cause, as a vicious image is pictured in a person's heart and his appetite inclines towards it. What is more, his spirit may be snatched away in this state, causing the *sū' al-khātimah* (Evil End), even if the root of faith remains to the extent that it gives out hope of salvation from the Evil End.

Just as what occurs in waking life only does so because of a particular cause which God knows, every dream has a cause in God. Some of them we know, and others we do not know. Just as we know that the sensation is connected from the object sensed to its correlative, whether in respect of resemblance or contrariety or contiguity, in the sense that the correlative has impinged on the attention as a consequence of the object sensed. With regard to resemblance, it is in that one looks at a beautiful thing and recollects another beautiful thing. With regard to contrariety, it is in that one looks at a beautiful thing and recollects something foul and reflects on the extreme incongruity between the two of them. With regard to contiguity, it is in that one looks at a horse which he has seen previously with a man and recalls that man. Moreover, the sensation may perhaps be connected from one thing to another without one knowing the rationale of its relationship, which can be constituted only by one middle term and two middle terms.

As, for example, when there is a connection from one thing to a second thing and from it to a third thing. Then the second thing is forgotten, and there is no relationship between

the third and the first, but there is a relationship between the third and the second and the second and the first. In the same way, the relationships of sensations which occur in dreams have causes of this kind, and similarly in the presence of the throes of death. Bearing on this—the knowledge of which is with God—is the person whose main occupation is sewing. You see him inclining his head as if he would take up his needle to sew with it, moistening his finger, which is practised with the thimble, and taking the garment from above him and appraising and measuring it as if he would occupy himself to the cutting of it, and then reaching his hand to the scissors.

Whoever is desirous of curbing what is impressed on him so as to exclude any connection with acts of disobedience and lusts, there is no way open to him except lifelong combat to wean himself from them and to throttle lusts out of the heart. This is the power which comes under choice, and long perseverance in virtue and isolation of reflection from evil are equipment and provisions against the state of the throes of death.

For a man dies as he has lived, and is gathered to Judgement as he has died. In this regard, it is related that a greengrocer was prompted at death to say the two *shahādahs* (the testimony that there is no god but God and that the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) is His Messenger), but he was saying five, six, four: His mind was preoccupied with counting, with which he had long familiarity before death.

One of the gnostics among the early Muslim community (*salaf*) said, “The Throne is a jewel blazing with light, and the creature has no state but its image is impressed on the Throne. When he is in the throes of death, the form of it is revealed to him from the Throne, and it may be that he will see himself in the form of disobedience. In the same way, it is disclosed to

him on the Day of Resurrection, when he sees the states of his soul, and shame and fear beyond description take hold of him. What he recollects accurately, all his bad deeds and veracious dreams is akin to.

The sleeper perceives what is in the future by perusal of the Preserved Tablet, and it is part of prophethood (*nubuwwah*). Thus, the *sū' al-khātimah* (Evil End) has been traced back to the state of the heart and the convulsions of ideas, and it is God who is the converter of hearts. The contingencies which decree the Evil End do not entirely depend on our efforts or choice, even if length of familiarity should leave its mark on them. In this respect, the gnostics have an intense fear of the *sū' al-khātimah* because if a man desires to see in his sleep nothing but the states of those who are sound in faith and the states of acts of obedience and worship, that is hard for him, even if he possesses a great deal of soundness, which he may affect with perseverance. But the confusions of fantasy are not wholly amenable to control, even if, for the most part, what appears in sleep has a relationship to what is dominant in waking life.

Thus, I heard the shaykh Abū 'Alī al-Fārmadhī describe to me that good conduct towards his shaykh was obligatory for a novice, and that there was not to be in his heart dissent from anything that he should say, or in his tongue any disputation with his shaykh. So he said that he related to his shaykh, Abū al-Qāsim al-Kirmānī, a vision in which the shaykh was saying such-and-such, and he was disagreeing with him. So the shaykh cut him off for a month and did not converse with him, saying, "Were it not that an excess of curiosity were within you and a dissent from what I am saying to you, you would not have said that in your sleep."

It is as Abū al-Qāsim said, as a man rarely sees in his sleep the contrary of what dominates his heart in his waking life. So this is the predestination of which we make large mention in the science of the operation of the secrets of the affair of *sū' al-khātimah*. What is beyond comes under the science of disclosure. It has been made clear to you by this that security from the *sū' al-khātimah* would consist in your seeing all things as they are in themselves without ignorance, and your being successful all your life in obeying God without disobedience. Consequently, if you know what is absurd or difficult, the fear which prevailed over the gnostics will inevitably prevail over you, so that your weeping and wailing will be prolonged on this account, and your grief and anxiety will be permanent because of it, just as we shall relate concerning the states of the prophets and the early Muslim community, who were sound in faith. It may be one of the causes which will excite the fire of fear in your heart.

You surely know by this that the actions of a lifetime are all lost unless the condition in which the soul leaves the body is safe, and that its safety in the midst of the waves of impressions is a big problem. In this connection, Muṭarrif ibn 'Abdullāh used to say, "Truly I am not amazed at a man who perishes, and how he perishes, but I am amazed at the man who is saved, and how he is saved." Likewise, Hāmid al-Laffaf said, "Whenever the angels bring up the spirit of a creature who is a believer and has died in a state of virtue and Islam, the angels wonder at him, saying, 'How was this man saved from a world in which the best were corrupted?'" Al-Thawrī was weeping on a certain day, and it was said to him, "What are you weeping about?" So he said, "I have wept for my sins for some time, and now I am weeping for Islam."

In sum, he whose ship chances on a fathomless sea with tempestuous winds assailing him and the waves in commotion is nearer to ruin than safety. The heart of the believer is in a more intense commotion than the ship, and the waves of the mind have a greater impact than the waves of the sea. The thing dreaded at death is simply an evil feeling whose occurrence is unique and this is the thing of which the Messenger of God spoke, "Truly, let a man do the work of the people of Paradise for fifty years, so that between him and Paradise there remains but the time between two milkings of a she-camel, then he will receive the End according as the Book has predestined."

The time between two milkings of a she-camel does not leave room for actions which determine his reprobation. Rather, it is the notions which produce commotion and which occur with the speed of forked lightning. Thus, Sahl said, "I beheld as if I were ushered into Paradise, and I saw three hundred prophets, and so I asked them, 'What was the thing that caused you the most fear in this world?' They said, '*Sū' al-khātimah* (the Evil End).'"

Because of this great peril, martyrdom was coveted and sudden death detested. Sudden death was coveted because it may happen along with the dominance of an evil impression and its mastery over the heart, which is not isolated from the like of it without⁶ repelling it through repugnance or the light of knowledge. Martyrdom was coveted because it is an expression for the snatching away of the spirit in a state when there remains in the heart nothing but the love of God, with the exit from the heart of the love of the world and family and wealth and children and every lust. This is because a man does not leap into the front line, disposing himself for death, except

6. Or: without it (the evil impression) being repelled.

out of love of God and in the quest for the satisfaction which is from Him, exchanging his present world for his afterlife and being satisfied with the bargain which God has made with him, saying, "God has purchased from the believers their persons and goods at the price of their possession of Paradise" (Qur'an, 9:111).

The seller has, no doubt, taken a dislike to the object sold, and the love of it is expelled from the heart and the exclusive love of the exchange sought is in his heart. The like of this circumstance may prevail over the heart in certain states, but the expiry of the spirit does not occur during them. The front line of jihad is a cause of the death in a circumstance which resembles this. This is so in respect of whoever is not aiming at victory, booty and fame for bravery. For whoever is in this state, even if he were killed on the battlefield, is remote from the like of this rank, as traditions have indicated.

Since the meaning of "*sū' al-khātimah*" and its fearful character have been expounded to you, occupy yourselves in making ready for it, persevere in the recollection of God, expel from your heart the love of the world and guard your limbs against doing disobedience and your heart from thinking about disobedience. Beware of witnessing acts of disobedience and witnessing those who practise them, for that also will leave its trace in your heart and thoughts, and impressions will veer off towards it. Beware lest you procrastinate and say, "I shall be prepared when the End comes," for every single breath is your End, since it is possible that your spirit may be snatched away in the course of it. So watch over your heart in every twinkling of the eye and beware lest you neglect it for an instant, for that instant may be your End, since it is possible that your spirit may be snatched away in the course of it. As long as you are awake, and with regard to when you are asleep, take care not

to go to sleep except in a state of outward and inward purity and that sleep overcomes you only after the dominance of the recollection of God over your heart. I am not saying over your tongue, for the movement of the tongue by itself is weak in its effect.

Know as conclusive that what dominates your heart at the moment of sleep is only what was dominant over it before sleep. Nothing is dominant in the course of sleep which was not dominant before sleep, and you do wake up from your sleep except in condition which was dominant over your heart during your sleep. Death and resurrection resemble sleep and awakening. Just the creature does not go to sleep in a state other than that which was dominant over him in his waking life and is not awakened in a state other than that in which he was during his sleep, so a man dies as he has lived and is gathered to Judgement as he has died.

It is conclusively verifiable and indubitable that death and Resurrection are two of your states, just as sleep and waking are two of your states. So believe in this, affirming its truth with the assent of the heart, if you are not among those who see it with the eye of certainty and the light of insight. Conserve your breaths and glances and see to it that you are not neglectful of God for the twinkling of an eye. For if you do all that, you are, in spite of it, in great peril. How, then, would you be if you do not do it? All men are perishable except the knowledgeable, and the knowledgeable are all perishable except those who practise their knowledge, and the practitioners are all perishable except those who are sincere, and the sincere, too, are in great peril.

Know that this will not be easy for you unless you are satisfied from this world according to your necessity, such as food, clothing and dwelling. The remainder, all of it,

is superfluous. The food which is necessary is what will straighten your back and support your subsistence, and you must take it as a distasteful necessity. Your liking for it is not to be more than your liking for excretion, since there is no distinction between inserting food into the stomach and its expulsion, both of which are natural necessities. Just as excretion is not something with which your heart is engaged, so the obtaining of food must not be part of your concern.

Know that if your concern is with what enters your stomach, then your worth is what is expelled from your stomach. If your purpose in eating is nothing but piety in the worship of God, as is your purpose in what your need decrees, its sign appears in three matters: frequency, quantity and quality. With regard to frequency, the least is that one should make do with a single meal during a day and night and should persevere in fasting. With regard to quantity, one should not exceed a third of the stomach's capacity. With regard to quality, one should not seek culinary pleasures; rather, one should be satisfied with whatever is available. So if you have power over these three items and the burden of lusts and pleasures falls off from you, you will have power thereafter to forsake similar items, and it will be easy for you not to eat anything except what He has made permissible; for what is permitted is rare and does not fulfil all that is desired.

With regard to your clothing, let your aim in respect of it be the repelling of heat and cold and the covering of nakedness. This includes and everything that repels cold from your head, even if it be a cap worth a farthing. Your seeking other than this is superfluous to you, and your time is wasted for it. It will entail for you constant labour and unremitting care in obtaining it, in acquiring on one occasion and yearning after on another what is forbidden and dubious. So take this

as your criteria in this matter that by which heat and cold are repelled from your body, attaining thereby the purpose of clothing. If you are not satisfied with the meagerness of its quantity and quality, you will have no halting place or point of return thereafter. Instead, you will be numbered with the man whose stomach is filled with nothing but dust.

Such is also the case with a dwelling. If you are content with its purpose, the heavens will suffice you as a roof, and the earth as a couch. If heat or cold overtakes you, there are mosques for you to shelter in. If you seek a specific dwelling, it will be a long business for you, and the most of your life will be spent in it, and your life is your merchandise. Then if you are prosperous, you will want the wall to be more than to afford you privacy, and that the roof should do more than to repel the rains, and so you will begin raising the walls and adorning the ceilings. You will have been hurled into a chasm which will take you a long time to climb out of.

Thus with all the necessary aspects of your affairs. If you confine yourself to them, you will have time to devote to God and will be able to lay in provisions for your afterlife and prepare for your *khātimah*. If you go beyond the limit of what is necessary for the highways of your lusts, your concentration will be distracted, and God will not be concerned in which allay He destroys you. So accept this advice from someone who is more in need of it than you.

Know that the space for finding and securing provision and taking precautionary measures is this short life. Therefore, if you defer it day after day in your procrastination or neglect, sudden death will snatch at a time other than you would wish, and your regret and repentance will never leave you. If you were not able to follow the advice we gave you due to the weakness in your feeling of fear—since our description of the

affair of the *khātimah* was not sufficient to make you afraid—we shall tell of the states of those who fear, in the hope that it will remove some of the hardness from your heart. For you will admit as true that the intellect of the prophets and saints and scholars, together with their actions and their status with God, were not inferior to your intellect, actions and status.

So reflect, in spite of your impaired insight and the defectiveness of the eye of your heart, on why fear was intense within them and grief and weeping prolonged in them, so that some of them would swoon, some would be beside themselves, some would collapse in a faint and some would fall to the ground dead. It would not be a wonder if that did not make an impression on your heart, for the hearts of the negligent are like stones or even harder, “for there are some stones from which rivers come gushing, and some have been split, so that water emerges from them, and some which crash down out of fear of God. God is not heedless of what you do” (Qur'an, 2:74).

8

The fear of prophets and angels

‘Aishah related that whenever the air was stirred and a tempestuous wind blew, the countenance of the Messenger of God would alter and he would rise up and pace up and down the room and go in and out. All that because of the fear of the chastisement of God.

The Messenger of God (ṣ) once recited a verse in Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah and then swooned.

God said, “And Mūsā fell in a swoon” (Qur’ān, 7:143).

The Messenger of God (ṣ) saw the form of Jibrīl in a valley and fell in a swoon.

It is related that when Jibrīl engaged in prayer, there was heard in his breast a bubbling like that of a cauldron. The messenger of God (ṣ) said, “Whenever Jibrīl came to me, he was trembling because of his separation from the Almighty.”

It was said, “When the news about the Devil was made public, Jibrīl and Mīkā'il began to weep, and God revealed to them both, ‘Why are the two of you indulging in all this weeping?’ They said, ‘O Lord, we are not secure from Your stratagems.’ So God said, ‘Thus it is: You are not secure from My stratagems.’”

Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir said, “When the Fire was created, a troop of angels flew up from their places, and when the sons of Adam were created, they returned.”

According to Anas, the Prophet (s) asked Jibrīl, "Why is it that I do not see Mīkā'il laughing?" Jibrīl said, "Mīkā'il has not laughed since the Fire was created."

It is said, "Truly in God's service are angels none of whom has laughed since the Fire was created for fear that God would be enraged with them and would punish them for it."

Ibn 'Umar said, "One day, I went out with the Messenger of God (s) until he entered one of the enclosures of the Madinan Helpers (*Ansār*) and began to pluck fruit from a palm tree and eat. The Messenger of God (s) said, 'O Ibn 'Umar, why are you not eating?' I said, 'O Messenger of God, I do not desire it.' So he said, 'But I desire it, and this is the fourth morning I have not tasted food or found it. If I were to ask my Lord, He would give me the kingdom of the Caesars and Chosroes (Rome and Persia). So how would you be, O Ibn 'Umar, if you were among a people who hoard up food for years on end while their faith is weakened?'" Ibn 'Umar continued, "By God, we did not move or get up until it was revealed, 'How many are the creatures that carry not their own provision, but God provides for them and you! He is the one who hears and knows' (Qur'an, 29:60). So the Messenger of God said, 'God has not commanded you to hoard up wealth or to follow lusts. Whoever hoards dinars desires thereby the life that passes away, for life is in the hand of God. I most certainly will not hoard either dinars or dirhams or lay up stocks for the morrow.'"

Abū al-Dardā' said that the bubbling of the heart of Ibrāhīm, the Friend of the Merciful, through fear of his Lord was heard at the distance of a mile when he engaged in prayer.

Mujāhid said, "Dāwūd wept for forty days, prostrate in worship, without lifting his head, so that the pastures sprouted, watered by his tears, and covered his head. Then he

was addressed, 'O Dāwūd, are you hungry? If so, you may eat. Are you thirsty? If so, you may drink. Are you naked? If so, you may be clothed.' Then he wept so bitterly that he energised the lute and was burnt up with the heat of his fear. Then God revealed to him repentance and pardon, and he said, 'O Lord, set my sin in my palm.' So his sin was inscribed on his palm, and he did not extend his palm for food or drink or for any other purpose without seeing it, and it made him weep." The narrator continued, "He was brought a bowl two-thirds full, and when he took it, he saw his sin and would not put it to his lip until it overflowed with his tears. It is said that he did not raise his head to the heavens up till the time of his death out of reverence for God. He used to say in his supplication, 'O God, when I recollect my sin, the earth, for all its breadth, hems me in, and when I recollect Your mercy, my spirit is restored. Praise be to You, O God. The physicians among Your creatures have come that they may nurse my sin to health, and they all point me to You. So may reprobation overtake them who despair of Your mercy.'"

Al-Fudayl said, "I have heard that Dāwūd recollected his sin on a certain day and bounded away shrieking with his hand laid on his head until he reached the mountains. The wild beasts gathered to him,¹ and he said, 'Return, I do not desire you. My only desire is for the person weeping because of his sin. So let no one confront me except while weeping, and whoever is not a sinner, let him not contrive sin for Dāwūd.' When he was chided for his prolific weeping, he said, 'Leave me alone. I am weeping before the exit of the day of weeping, before the tearing apart of the bones and the burning of the intestines and before the angels ordain severe penalties for

1. See Margaret Smith, *al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, pp. 50-51.

me, the angels who do not disobey God in respect of what He commands but perform what they are commanded.”

‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Umar said, “Whenever Dāwūd committed a sin, his voice was diminished and he said, ‘O Lord, my voice is hoarse among the pure voices of the sincere.’” And it is reported that whenever he wept for a long time and it did not benefit him, his power was straitened, his perplexity was intensified and he would say, “O Lord, will You not pity my weeping?” God revealed to him, “O Dāwūd, you have forgotten your sin and remembered your weeping.” So he said, “My God and my Master, how do I forget my sin? When I recited the psalms, running water desisted from its flow, the blowing of the wind was stilled, the birds furnished shade to my head and the wild beasts were intimates at my palace. O my God and my Master, what then is this alienation which is between me and You?” God revealed to him, “That was the intimacy of obedience, and this is the alienation of disobedience. O Dāwūd, Adam was one of My creatures. I created him with My hand and I breathed into him of My spirit and I made My angels do obeisance to him; and I clothed him in the robe of My preferment, crowned him with the unique crown of My dignity and image, gave him as a wife, Eve, My handmaid, and settled him in My Garden. He disobeyed Me, and so I expelled him from My precincts, naked and abased. O Dāwūd, listen to Me, and I shall speak the truth. You obeyed Us and We obliged you, you asked Us and We gave to you and you disobeyed Us and We showed forbearance to you. If you return to Us, We shall receive you.”

Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr said, “I have heard that it was Dāwūd’s custom when he desired to engage in weeping to pass the time for seven days beforehand neither eating nor drinking, nor approaching women. When it was a day

beforehand, the pulpit was brought out to him in the desert, and he commanded Sulaymān to cry out with a voice that would cross the countryside and its environs of thickets, hills, mountains, deserts and monastic cells. And in it he proclaimed, 'Are there not those who desire to hear Dāwūd's wailing for himself? Let them then come along.' And the wild beasts came from the deserts and the hills; the lions from the thickets; the reptiles from the mountains; the birds from the nests; and the virgins from their bowers. The people assembled for that day. Dāwūd came to ascend the pulpit, and the children of Israel surrounded him. Every kind according to its class surrounded him, and Sulaymān stood by his side.

"So Dāwūd launched into an encomium of his Lord and broke into weeping and shrieking. Then he launched into the recollection of Paradise and the Fire, and the reptiles died together with a group of the wild beasts, the lions and the people. Then he launched into the terrors of the Day of Resurrection and into wailing over himself, and a group of every class died. When Sulaymān saw the large numbers of the dead, he said, 'O father, you have decimated your audience. They are all decimated, and sections of the children of Israel and of the beasts and reptiles have died.'

"So he launched into a petition, and while in this posture, one of the devotees of the children of Israel called out to him, 'O Dāwūd, you are overhasty in seeking your reward from your Lord.' Then Dāwūd fell in a swoon, and when Sulaymān noted what had overtaken him, he brought a mattress and carried him on it. Then he commanded someone to call out, 'Is there not someone who had a friend or relative with Dāwūd? Let him then bring a mattress and carry him off, for the recollection of Paradise and the Fire has killed those who were with him.' So a woman would bring a mattress and would

bear away her relative saying, 'O you whom the recollection of the Fire has killed. O you whom the fear of God has killed.' Then when Dāwūd revived, he stood up, placed his hand on his head, entered his chapel and locked its door, saying 'O God of Dāwūd, are You angry with Dāwūd?' And he communed ceaselessly with his Lord. So Sulaymān arrived, squatted at the door and asked for permission to come in. Then he entered and had with him a barley bannock, saying, 'O father, build up your strength with this according to your desire.' So he ate of that cake as God willed, went out to the children of Israel and was in their midst."

Yazīd al-Raqqāshī said, "Dāwūd went out among the people on a certain day to preach to them and inspire fear in them. About forty thousand went out, and thirty thousand of them died, with only about ten thousand returning." He went on, "He had two slave girls whom he had appointed, so that when fear came to him and he collapsed and was agitated, they squatted on his breast and legs for fear that his limbs and joints would be dismembered and he would die."

Ibn 'Umar said, "Yaḥyā, the son of Zakariyyā, went into the Jerusalem temple (he was a lad of eight years) and looked at their devotees who were clad in shirts of hair and wool. He observed their zealots who had bored through their clavicles, inserted chains in them and fastened themselves to the extremities of the temple that filled him with awe. He was made to return to his parents and passed by two lads at play, who said to him, 'O Yaḥyā, come and play with us.' So he said, 'I was not created for play.' So he came to his parents and asked them to clothe him in hair, and they did so. Then he returned to the temple, serving in it by day and keeping the lamps trimmed by night, until he attained his fifteenth birthday.

"Then he went out and roamed the lofty mountains and subterranean paths of the earth. So his parents went out in search of him, and overtook him by the River Jordan. He had soaked his feet in the water until the thirst was almost killing him, saying the while, 'By Your might and majesty, I will not taste a cool drink until I know where I stand with You.' His parents asked him to break his fast on a barley bannock which they had with them and to drink some of that water. So he did so, made expiation for the breaking of his oath and commended filial piety.

"Thus, his parents brought him back to the temple. When he stood praying, he used to weep, so that the trees and earth would weep with him, and Zakariyyā would weep because of his weeping until Yahyā would faint. He would weep without remission, so that the tears pierced the flesh of his cheeks and his molars were visible to the onlookers. His mother said to him, 'O my son, would that you would permit me to fetch for you something to cover up your molars from those who look on!' So he gave her permission, and she procured two pieces of felt and stuck them to his cheeks. So it came about that whenever he got up to pray, he wept, and when his tears saturated the two pads, his mother came to him and wrung them out. When he saw his tears flowing over his mother's forearms, he said, 'O God, these are my tears, this is my mother, I am Your creature, and of those who are merciful You are the most merciful.'

"Zakariyyā said to him one day, 'My son, I have asked my Lord to bestow you on me so that my eyes might be refreshed with you.' Yahyā said, 'O my father, Jibril has reported to me that between Paradise and the Fire is a desert which only those who weep will cross.' Zakariyyā said, 'O my son, in that case weep on.'"

The Messiah said, "O band of disciples, the fear of God and the love of Paradise produce patience in the face of difficulty and keep you at a distance from the world. In truth I say to you: Surely the eating of barley and sleeping on pile of rubbish with the dogs is a small price in the quest for Paradise."

It was said that whenever Ibrāhīm, the Friend of God, recollected his sin, he fainted, and the commotion of his heart would be heard miles away. Then Jibril would come and say to him, "Your Lord greets you with peace and says, 'Do I see a friend who fears his friend?'" So he would say, "O Jibril, when I recollect my sin, I forget my friendship."

These, then, are the states of the prophets. See to it that you reflect on them, for they are the most knowledgeable of God's creatures concerning God and His attributes. May God's blessings be on them all and on all the creatures of God who are near to Him. Sufficient for us is God, and in Him we trust.

9

The fear of Companions, their students, the early Muslim community and the sound in faith

*G*t is related that Abū Bakr al-Šiddīq said to a bird, “Would that I were like you, O bird, and had not been created a human.”

Abū Dharr said, “Would that I were a tree which is pruned.” Talḥah said a similar thing. ‘Uthmān said, “Would that, when I died, I were not raised.” ‘Ā’ishah said, “Would that I became a thing forgotten” (Qur’ān, 19:23).

It is related that ‘Umar used to collapse and faint out of fear whenever he heard a verse from the Qur’ān, and regained consciousness after some days. One day, he took a straw from the ground and said, “Would that I were this straw; would that I did not remember anything; would that I were a thing forgotten; would that my mother had not borne me.”

On ‘Umar’s face were two black furrows made by tears, and he said, “Whoever fears God will not heal his distress, and whoever has reverence for God will not do what he desires. Were it not for the Day of Resurrection, it would be other than what you see.” Whenever ‘Umar recited, “When the sun shall be darkened” (Qur’ān, 81:1) and came to His saying “When the pages will be spread open” (Qur’ān, 81:10), he fell in a faint. He passed by the home of a man one day who was praying and reciting the Sūrah “By the Mount” (Qur’ān, 52:1). ‘Umar stopped to listen, and when he reached His saying “Surely,

your Lord's chastisement is about to fall; there is none to avert it" (Qur'an, 52:7-8), he came down from his ass, leaned against a wall, stayed for some time and then returned to his lodging, where he was ill for a month. People visited him, not knowing what had made him ill.

'Alī, having said the *salām* at the close of the *fajr* prayer, became sorrowful, turned his hand inside out and said, "I have seen the Companions of Muḥammad (s), and have not seen anything today resembling them. They got up in the morning, dishevelled, pallid, with dust between their eyes like a funeral cortege. They had devoted the night to God, prostrate and erect, reciting the Book of God, alternating between their foreheads and their feet. When they got up, they recollected God and swayed like trees in a day of gale, and their eyes were so swamped with tears that their garments became damp. By God! It is as if I were among a crowd who pass the night in heedlessness." Then he stood up. After that he was not seen laughing until he was struck by Ibn Muljam.

'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn said, "Would that I were ashes, so that the wind would scatter me in a day of gale." Abū 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ said, "Would that I were a ram, and that my family slaughtered me, ate my flesh and sipped my gravy."

Whenever 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn performed his ablutions, he grew pallid and his family would ask him, "What is this habit of yours whenever you perform your ablutions?" He would say, "Do you know before Whom I am going to stand in prayer?"

Mūsa ibn Mas'ūd said, "Whenever we granted an audience to al-Thawrī, it was as if the Fire had surrounded us in respect of the fear and grief we saw in him."

Mudar, the reciter of the Qur'an, recited one day, "This is our Book, which speaks the truth against you. Lo, We have

caused (all) you did to be recorded" (Qur'an, 45:29), and 'Abd al-Wāhid ibn Zayd wept until he swooned. When he revived, he said, "By Your might, I have never disobeyed You so far as in me lies, so help me with Your *tawfiq* so that I may obey You."

Al-Miswar ibn Makhramah used to be unable to hear anything of the Qur'an on account of the intensity of his fear. There had been recited in his presence a word and a verse, at which he gave a shriek and was not mentally composed for days afterwards, until a man from Khath'am¹ came him and recited to him, "The day We shall gather the righteous to God, Most Gracious, like a band presented before a king for honours. And We shall drive the sinners to Hell, like thirsty cattle driven down to water" (Qur'an, 19:85-86). So he said, "I am among the sinners and not among those who show piety. Repeat the saying to me, O reciter." So he repeated it to him, whereupon he gave his last gasp and reached the next world.

There was recited in the presence of Yahyā al-Bakkā', "If you could but see when they are confronted with their Lord" (Qur'an, 6:30), at which he shrieked, and he remained ill because of it for four months, being visited from every corner of Basra.

Mālik ibn Dīnār said, "I was circumambulating the House when I came on a little slave girl performing her devotions and clinging to the curtains of the Ka'bah, saying, 'O Lord, how many a lust there is whose pleasure has disappeared and whose consequences have remained! O Lord, do You not possess any other correction and punishment save the Fire?' She was weeping and remained in that posture until dawn broke. When I saw that, I placed my hand on my head, shrieking, 'May Mālik's mother be bereft of him!'"

1. Name of a mountain.

It is related that al-Fuḍayl was seen on the day of ‘Arafah. The people were praying, and he was weeping burning-hot tears like a woman who has lost her son. Just before sunset, he seized hold of his beard, raised his head to the heavens and said, “I am so ashamed, even if You are forgiving.” Then he joined the people.

Ibn ‘Abbās was asked about those who fear, at which he said, “Their hearts are ulcerated by fear, and their eyes are tearful. They say, ‘How can we rejoice while death is behind us, the grave is before us, Resurrection is our rendezvous, our route is Hell and in front of God or Lord is our halting place?’”

Al-Hasan passed by a youth who was engulfed in his laughter, and he was sitting in the company of a crowd. Al-Hasan asked him, “Have you crossed over the Bridge?” He said, “No.” He asked, “Do you know whether your trend is towards Paradise or the Fire?” He said, “No.” He asked, “What then does this laughter mean?” The narrator said, “That youth was not seen laughing thereafter.”

It was the custom of Ḥammād ibn ‘Abd Rabbih to sit on his haunches when he sat down. It was said to him, “I wish you would relax,” at which he would say, “That is the posture of security, and I am anything but secure, since I have disobeyed God.”

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz said, “It was for nothing but considerations of mercy that God set this negligence in the hearts of the creatures in order that they might not die for fear of God.”

Mālik ibn Dīnār said, “I have been concerned lest, when I die, He will command them to shackle and manacle me, then bear me off to my Lord just as the runaway slave is borne off to his master.”

Hātim al-Asamm said, “Do not be deceived by a salubrious place, for there is no place more salubrious than Paradise,

and Adam encountered what he encountered in it. Do not be deceived by much worship, for the Devil encountered what he encountered after a long period of worship. Do not be deceived by much knowledge, for Bal'ām² used to adorn the Greatest Name of God and see what he encountered. And do not be deceived by the vision of the sound in faith, for there is no person of greater standing with God than the Prophet (ṣ), but neither his relations nor his enemies were benefited by his proximity to God.”

Al-Sari said, “I look at my nose several times every day for fear that my face may have been blackened.”

Abū Ḥafṣ (of Nishapur) said, “For forty years my belief concerning myself has been that God will look at me with severe displeasure, and my deeds indicate that.”

Ibn al-Mubārak went out among his companions one day and said, “I took a liberty yesterday with God and asked Him for Paradise.”

Umm Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraṣī said to her son, “O my boy, I know you as a good child and a virtuous adult, but what you do with your nights and days makes it look as if you had inaugurated a pernicious heresy.” He said, “O Mother, what will make me secure from God, who has come on me while I was engaged in one of my sins and has taken a loathing to me, saying, ‘By My might and majesty, I will not pardon you.’”

Al-Fudayl said, “Truly I do not envy the prophet who is sent or the king who is preferred or the creature who is sound in faith. Will they not encounter Resurrection? The only person whom I envy is he who was not created.”

It is recorded that the fear of the Fire entered a lad among the Madīnan Helpers, and he was weeping to such an extent

2. Cf. Book of Numbers xxii f.

that it detained him in the house. So the Prophet came to visit him and embraced him and he fell dead. So he said, "Prepare your companion for burial, for fear of the Fire has crushed his liver."

It is recorded that whenever Ibn Abī Maysarah retired to his bed, he would say, "Would that my mother had not borne me!" So his mother said to him, "O Maysarah, God has made a good job of your guidance towards Islam." He said, "Yes, but God has made it clear to us that we are those who go down to the Fire, and He has not made it clear to us that we shall come up from it."

It was said to Farqad al-Sabkhī, "Tell us the most wonderful thing you have heard concerning the children of Israel." He said, "I have heard that five hundred virgins entered the Jerusalem temple wearing wool and wool garments. They were recollecting God's reward and punishment, and all of them died in a single day."

'Aṭā' al-Sulamī was one of those who fear, and he would never ask God for Paradise. All he would ask for was forgiveness. It was said to him during his illness, "Do you not desire anything?" He said, "Surely, fear of Hell has not left a place in my heart for desire." It was said that he did not lift his head to the heavens or laugh for forty years. One day, he raised his head and was stricken with fear and collapsed, cutting his stomach. He used to feel his body at night from time to time for fear of its being deformed. Whenever a gale or lightning struck his people or there was a rise in food prices, he would say, "The calamities are because of me. Would that 'Aṭā' were dead so that my people were relieved."

'Aṭā' also said, "We, along with old people and young adults, went out with 'Utbah al-Ghulām³ to pray the *fajr*

3. A disciple of al-Hasan al-Baṣrī.

prayer with the ablution (*wudū'*) we had performed for the '*ishā'* prayer. Their legs had become swollen through their long standing, their eyes were sunken in their heads, their skin stuck to their bones and their veins stood out as if they were cords. It was as if their skins were the rinds of water melons, and as if they had come out from the grave to report how God preferred the obedient and deposed the disobedient. On a day of intense cold, while they were going along, one of them passed by a certain place and fell in a faint, and his companions sat round him, weeping. And his forehead was dripping sweat, so they brought water and wiped his face, and he recovered. Then they asked him about his experience, and he said, 'I remembered that I had once disobeyed God in that place.'

Şâlih al-Murri said, "I recited to a man who was one of the devotees, 'On the Day when their faces will be turned about in the Fire, they will say, 'Would that we had obeyed God and the Messenger' (Qur'an, 33:66), and he fell in a swoon. Then he revived and said, 'Give me more of it, O Şâlih, for I find it perplexing.' So I recited, 'Whenever they wish to come out of it, they will be sent back into it' (Qur'an, 32:22), and he fell dead."

It is reported that when Zarārah ibn Abī Awfā was leading the people in the *fajr* prayer, he recited, "When the Trumpet is sounded" (Qur'an, 74:8), fainted and was carried away a corpse.

Yazīd al-Raqqāshī entered the presence of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, who said, "Preach to me, O Yazīd." He said, "O Commander of the Faithful, know that you are not the first caliph to die." At this he wept. Then he said, "Give me more." He said, "O Commander of the Faithful, there is no ancestor between you and Adam who is not a corpse." He wept again,

then said, "Give me more, O Yazid." So he said, "O Commander of the Faithful, there is no lodging between you and Paradise and the Fire," whereupon 'Umar collapsed in a faint.

Maymūn ibn Mihrān said, "Upon the revelation of the verse 'Surely Hell will be the promised place for them all' (Qur'an, 15:43), Salmān al-Fārisī shrieked, placed his hand on his head and went out as a fugitive for three days during which they could not contain him."

Dāwūd al-Tā'i saw a woman weeping over the head of her son's grave and saying, "O my son, would that I knew whether or not the worm has started to bite." Hearing this, Dāwūd went into a swoon and fell on the spot.

It was said when Sufyān al-Thawrī was ill, his symptoms were disclosed to a *dhimmi*⁴ physician, who said, "Fear has severed the liver of this man." And he came and felt his arteries and said, "I did not know there was his like in the Muslim community."

Aḥmad ibn Hanbal said, "I asked God to give me access to a gate of fear, and it was opened. Then I feared for my intellect and said, 'O Lord, in accordance with what I can bear.' So my heart was quieted."

'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ said, "Weep, and if you cannot weep, pretend to weep. For by the one in whose hand is my soul, if any of you knew what was in store, he would scream until his voice was cut off, and would pray until his back was broken." It is as if he was indicating the meaning of the Prophet's (s) words "If you knew what I know, you would laugh little and weep much."

Al-'Anbarī said, "The masters of Hadīth were assembled at the gate of al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād when he came suddenly into their view at a window. Weeping, and his beard quivering, he

4. Free non-Muslims enjoying Muslim protection.

said, 'Get down to your Qur'an and to prayer. Woe to you! This is not a time for traditions; this is a time for nothing but weeping, entreaty, humility and prayer like that of a drowning man. Guard your tongue, preserve your mobility, discipline your heart, hold on to what you know and let go of what you abhor.'

Al-Fudayl was seen walking one day when he was asked, "Where are you going?" He said, "I do not know," walking about dejected with fear.

Dharr ibn 'Amr asked his father 'Amr ibn Dharr, "Why is it that when theologians discourse, no one weeps, whereas when you discourse, I hear weeping on every side?" He replied, "O my son, the weeping of the bereaved mother is not like the weeping of the woman who is hired."

It is related that a crowd of people halted by a devotee who was weeping, and they said to him, "What is it that makes you weep? May God have compassion on you." He said, "An ulcer which those who fear find in their heart." They asked, "What is it?" He said, "The fear of the summons for presentation to God."

Al-Khawwāṣ used to weep and say in his supplication, "I am lifted up in pride, and my flesh is too weak to serve You, so embrace me."

Sāliḥ al-Murri said, "Ibn al-Sammāk came up to us once and said, 'Show me something of the marvels of your devotees.' So I brought him to a man who was in his hut in a certain quarter of the town, and we asked permission to enter. There was a man who was working with palm fronds, and I recited to him, 'See the shackles and chains on their necks; they will be dragged into the hot (water), then they will be stoked into the Fire' (Qur'an, 40:71). The man gave a gasp and fell in a faint, and we went out from his presence and left him in this state.

"We went off to another man and entered, and I recited this verse, whereupon he gave a gasp and fell in a faint. So we went off and asked permission to go to a third man, who said, 'Enter if you will not distract me from my Lord.' I recited, 'That is for him who fears My majesty and fears my threat' (Qur'an, 14:14).

"He gave a gasp, started bleeding from his nostrils and swallowed in his blood until it was dried up. We left him in this state and went out. Then I took him on a tour of six persons, the presence of each of whom we left, leaving him in a faint. Then I took him to the seventh, and we asked permission to enter. There was a woman from within the hut saying, 'Enter.' When we entered, there was a shaykh in a trance, sitting on his prayer mat. We greeted him, but he did not notice our salutation, and so I said to him in a raised voice, 'Is there not a morrow appointed for the creature?' So the shaykh said, 'In whose presence? Alas for you.' Then he remained stupefied, his mouth ajar and stare fixed, crying out with his weak voice, 'Alas! Alas!' until the voice was cut off. His wife said, 'Make your way out, for you will not benefit from him for the moment.'

"When that was over, I enquired of the people. Three had revived, and three had attained to God. As for the shaykh, he remained in his condition, dazed and bewildered, for three days, without performing a religious obligation, and when the three days had passed, he came to his senses."

Yazid ibn al-Aswad used to be of the opinion that he was one of the saints (*abdāl*),⁵ and he had sworn that he would

5. Certain righteous persons of whom the world is never destitute. When one dies, God substitutes another in his place. About forty in number—the same number as those who took part in the Battle of Badr. Hence *abdāl* (lit., substitutes or successors).

never laugh, sleep in a reclining position or eat butter. So he was never seen laughing, lying down or eating butter until he died.

Al-Hajjāj said to Sa‘id ibn Jubayr, “I have heard that you have never laughed.” So he said, “How could I laugh with Hell ablaze, the manacles installed and the Warders of Hell given their assignment?”

A man said to al-Hasan, “O Abū Sa‘id, how do you fare?” He said, “Well.” He asked, “How is your state?” Al-Hasan smiled and said, “You ask me about my state. What do you suppose concerning people who have travelled in a ship until they were in mid-ocean, where their ship was broken up, and every one of them clung to a piece of wood? In what state is he?” The man said, “In a state of great extremity.” Al-Hasan said, “My state is one of greater extremity than theirs.”

A freed female slave (*mawlat*) went in to ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and greeted him. Then she went into ‘Umar’s prayer hall and prayed two *rak’ahs*. Then sleep overcame her eyes, and she slept, and wept in her sleep. Then she was roused and said, “O Commander of the Faithful! By God, I have seen a miracle in my dream.” He asked, “What was it?” She said, “I saw the Fire, and its flames were licking its people. Then a bridge was brought and was placed over the centre of it.” He said, “Go on.” She said, “Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān was brought and was borne on it, and he had gone only a little way when the bridge capsized him and he was flung into Hell.” So ‘Umar said, “Go on.” She said, “Then al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik was brought and was borne on it, and he had gone only a little way when the bridge capsized him, flinging him into Hell.” ‘Umar told her to go on. She said, “Then Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik was brought, and he had progressed only a little way over it when the bridge capsized him, throwing him

in the same way." 'Umar said, "Go on." She said, "Then you were brought, and by God, O Commander of the Faithful!" At this, 'Umar gave a shriek and fell in a faint. She then came up to his side and began shouting in his ear, "O Commander of the Faithful, I saw you, and by God, you were saved! I saw you, and by God, you were saved!" The narrator went on, "She was calling out, and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz was yelling and scraping the ground with his feet."

It is related that Uways al-Qarānī used to be present with the storyteller and would weep hearing his stories. When the storyteller recounted fire, Uways would scream. Then he would rise and make off, with the people following him, saying, "Mad! Mad!"

Mu'ādh ibn Jabal said, "The fear of the believer is not silenced until he leaves behind him the Bridge of Hell."

Tāwūs used to roll out his mattress, lie down and toss about like a seed in the frying pan. Then he would leap up, fold it up, face the *qiblah* until morning and say, "The recollection of Hell has driven out the sleep from those who fear."

Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī said, "A man emerges from the Fire after a thousand years. Would that I were that man." He said that solely on account of his fear of eternal punishment and the *sū' al-khātimah*. It is related that he did not laugh for forty years. The narrator went on, "When you saw him squatting, you would think that a prisoner had come forward in order that you might strike his neck. When he spoke, it was as if he were witnessing the next world and reporting on its sights. When he was silent, it was as if the Fire were kindled between his eyes. He was chided for the extremity of his grief and fear, so he said, 'What makes me secure from God, who, having suddenly come to me while I was engaged in something which He abhors, taken a loathing to me and said, 'Be off, for I will

not pardon you, since I am dealing with a person who does not cooperate?"

Ibn al-Sammāk said, "I preached one day, and a youth in the crowd stood up and said, 'O Abū al-'Abbās, you have truly preached today such a word that I should not care if I never heard another.' I said, 'God bless you. What was the word?' He said, 'Your saying 'The hearts of those who fear have grasped the duration of the two eternities, whether in Paradise or the Fire.' Then he disappeared from my view, and so I lost him in the meeting." In another recension, he said, "I did not see him, so I enquired about him and was told that he was sick and was being visited. So I went to visit him and asked, 'O my brother, what condition is this I see you in?' The youth said, 'O Abū al-'Abbās, it is the consequence of your saying 'The hearts of those who fear have grasped the duration of the two eternities, whether in Paradise or the Fire.' Then he died, and I saw him in sleep and asked him, 'O my brother, how did God deal with you?' He said, 'He has pardoned me, shown me compassion and given me entrance to Paradise.' I said, 'By what means?' He said, 'By means of the word.'"

These are the things which terrify prophets, saints, scholars and those sound in faith, and fear is more appropriate to us than to them. But fear not the product of a multitude of sins. Rather, it goes along with purity of heart and perfection of knowledge. God has not given us a feeling of security because of the paucity of our sins and because of our acts of obedience. Instead, our lusts have driven us, wretchedness has prevailed over us and our heedlessness and hardness have obstructed us from examining our states, so that neither the nearness of the journey will rouse us, nor the multitude of sins move us, nor the witnessing of the states of those who fear terrify us, nor the danger of the Evil End disquiet us. So we ask God to guide

our states with His bounty and generosity and make us whole. And even if the movement of the tongue in asking is totally unsupported by self-help, may it benefit us.

Among the things to be wondered at is that when we desire wealth in this world, we sow and plant and trade and cross over seas and deserts and incur risks. If we seek the status of knowledge, we study and become tired in retaining it and repeating it, and pass sleepless nights. We are energetic in the search for our provisions, do not rely on the pledge of God to us and do not sit in our houses, saying, "O God, provide for us." Then, when our eyes are lifted towards the Kingdom,⁶ which is enduring and does not pass away, we are content to say with our tongues, "O God, pardon us and show us compassion." But the one Whom we return to, and the one in Whom is our pride and glory, will call out and say, "A man gets exactly the result of his striving" (Qur'an, 53:40); "Let not the beguiler beguile you about God" (Qur'an, 31:33; 35:5); and "O man, what has deceived you from your generous Lord?" (Qur'an, 82:6).

All that does not rouse us or bring us out from the alleys of our delusions and wishful thoughts is only a fearful trial if God does not bestow sincere repentance on us by grace, overtaking us with it and protecting us. So let us ask God to bestow penitence on us. Moreover, let us ask Him to drive towards repentance the secret things of our hearts and not to make the movement of the tongue in asking for repentance the limit of our portion. For in that case, we should be among those who say and do not act, who hear and are not receptive. When we hear the sermon, we weep, and when the time for action comes in connection with what we have heard, we are disobedient.

6. See p. 99. n. 3.

There is no mark of alienation greater than this. So let us ask God to bestow on us success and direction through His grace and bounty.

With regard to the states of those who fear, we shall confine ourselves to what we have cited. For a little of this will confront the receptive heart and will suffice, whereas much of it, even if it overflows the negligent heart, will not be adequate.

A monk of whom ‘Isā ibn Mālik al-Khawlānī—one of the most elect of the devotees—related spoke the truth. ‘Isā ibn Mālik saw him at the gate of the Jerusalem temple with the appearance of one grief-stricken through extreme dejection, his eyes hardly ever dry because of the profusion of his weeping. ‘Isā said, “When I saw him, his appearance terrified me, and I said, ‘O monk, give me advice (*naṣīḥah*) which I can retain in my memory on your authority.’ The monk said, ‘O my brother, what would I command when you are able to occupy the place of a man whom wild beasts and vermin have surrounded, and who is fearful and watchful, fearing lest he may be negligent and end up mauled by the beasts, or distracted and end up bitten by the vermin. Thus, his heart is filled with fear and terror. He passes his nights in fear, even if those who delude themselves feel secure, and passes his days in grief, even if the empty-headed make merry.’ Then he turned his back to me and left. I said, ‘Will you not tell me something more? Perhaps it would benefit me.’ He said, ‘The smallest quantity of water satisfies the thirsty man.’”

He certainly spoke the truth, for fear will move soonest the heart which is pure, but the hard one turns away from every sermon.

What he mentioned in his hypothesis is that wild beasts and vermin had surrounded him, and so one ought not to suppose that it is merely hypothetical. Rather, it is reality, for

if you were to view your inner man with the light of insight, you would see it filled with different kinds of wild beasts and species of vermin, such as anger, lust, rancour, envy, pride, self-esteem, self-righteousness and the rest. It is these which are constantly mauling you and biting you if you neglect them for an instant. Only your eye is veiled from the sight of them. But when the cover is withdrawn and you are placed in your grave, you will encounter them, and they will be imaged to you according to the forms and shapes which suit their respective meanings. So you will see with your eye scorpions and snakes, and they will surround you in your grave. These are nothing but the attributes now present to you and whose forms have been disclosed to you.

If you desire to slay and subdue them, and are able to do so before death, then do so. Otherwise, prepare to be stung and bitten in the core of your heart, to say nothing of your outer flesh. *Wa al-salām.*



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